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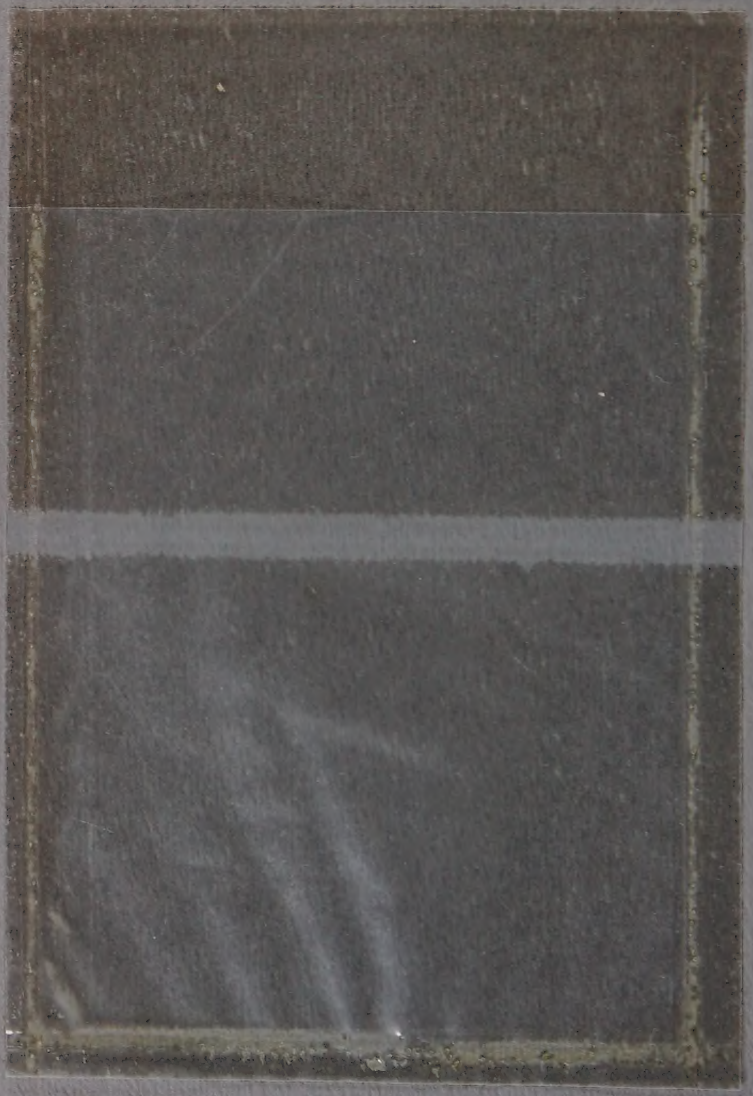

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THROUGH THE BEGINNING

IN FOUR VOLUMES

FREDERICK UNGAR PUBLISHING CO.
NEW YORK

OF LITERARY CRITICISM

nd American Authors

OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Abridged, revised, and with additions by

MARTIN TUCKER

Associate Professor of English
Long Island University

VOLUME I

The Beginnings
to the Seventeenth Century

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Below the introductory paragraph for each writer included in these volumes, the reader will find bibliographic entries of standard editions and biographical and/or critical studies published through 1964. The scheme of these entries is as follows:

The standard edition (or editions) of the writer's work is placed first; where one-volume texts and selected editions of excellence merit attention, these are listed next; on occasion convenient school texts are also noted; following the list of editions are standard biographical and critical studies. In cases where scholarly study has been particularly active, or literary issues remain in the realm of disputation and/or doubt, several biographical and critical works may be noted. Short titles are sometimes used, especially in editions of an author's work. In certain selected cases a study of a single work, as distinct from the collected edition of an author's work, will be found in the bibliographical listings.

Abbreviations used in the entries are: *repr.* for reprint; *rev.* for revision; *OSA* for Oxford Standard Authors one-volume editions; *ed.* for "edited by"; and *tr.* for "translated by."

Early standard editions listed in the original Moulton headnotes are usually not repeated in the bibliographical entries. Standard editions in the new listings, and their revisions and reprints, indicate availability, although they do not guarantee it.

INTRODUCTION

Charles Wells Moulton's reference work, running to almost five million words, has rightly been considered an outstanding contribution to the field of literary criticism. Through his organization of excerpts from essays, studies, books, manuscripts, journals, and letters, Moulton created a montage in which each writer's development, his critical reputation, and his standing in the history of literature fell into place. Moulton's work includes not only literary figures, but also journalists and art and music critics, as well as writers in the fields of philosophy, history, religion, scientific theory, and hymnal lyrics and music.

Published more than sixty years ago, much of Moulton's work has continued to retain its usefulness. However, the passage of time and changes in perspective have removed a large part of this work from contemporary interest. To preserve what is still of value in the original Moulton and to add new material on writers whose work was published and recognized at the turn of the century is the aim of this revised and abridged edition. It has thus become necessary to separate the living parts of Moulton from what must now be considered its parochial vestiges—that is, material that has not survived its dated significance. Material that now is of marginal interest, as well as material on "writers" not profoundly concerned with literature, has been eliminated. In addition, the revised work has tried to avoid the repetition that ensued when Moulton presented the same point of view several times, apparently in order to emphasize the recurrence of a particular attitude. This revised edition presents the significant available material in a compact form.

Eleven writers have been added to the list of studies in the present edition. Most of them were alive when Moulton's work was planned, and

this fact may have been the reason for their omission. These writers are Austin Dobson, Ernest Dowson, W. S. Gilbert, Edward Lear, Richard Le Gallienne, George Meredith, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Francis Thompson, Theodore Watts-Dunton, and the American utopian writer, Edward Bellamy.

Moulton's scanty exploration of Herman Melville has been replaced by an entirely new section on one of America's great writers. In addition, supplementary material has been added to headnotes and/or text on such writers as Geoffrey Chaucer, Thomas Malory, John Webster, Thomas Dekker, John Ford, Thomas Carew, James Fenimore Cooper, Lewis Carroll, and John Addington Symonds.

In adding this supplementary material, the revised edition provides a historical picture of shifting trends as well as retaining the original function of providing a vast body of representative criticism on major writers and their works. Moulton's failure to consider Melville adequately may be attributed to the vogue of literary criticism then in currency. The omission of Edward Lear, who died in 1888, suggests that one type of nonsense had fallen into grave silence on critical grounds. His omission is but another example of the critical attitude prevailing at the turn of the century.

In the sections on Melville and the eleven British and American writers, a modification of Moulton's work will be observed. Moulton's critical excerpts are dated no later than 1900, but in the sections on the above writers, excerpts are selected from studies published up to 1914.* This change in editorial policy is based on the fact that these new writers were publishing fairly close to the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, and that, in any case, a perspective on them was not possible until after their death, when the whole body of their work could be examined. The cataclysmic events in Europe at this time ended the era in which most of these writers lived and thus seemed the proper terminal point for a study of their work. One curious example among these writers is Richard Le Gallienne, who lived until 1947, but whose major work was published at the turn of the century.

This edition also supplements the original Moulton with a listing of the current standard editions of each writer's work (when available), and the best available biographical and/or critical study published through 1964. This information is found at the end of the introductory headnote under each writer's name. Through the use of the revised Moulton text and bibliographic entries, the student can form an image of a writer's produc-

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* The one exception to this policy is the inclusion of two passages from the standard text, *The Life and Letters of Theodore Watts-Dunton,* written, compiled, and edited by Francis Hake and Arthur Compton-Rickett, and published in London in 1916.

tion and the escalation or evaporation of that writer's reputation in the critical wars of the centuries. Short titles are often used in these bibliographic entries as a matter of convenience, and where no confusion can result from their application.

Like the original Moulton, this edition includes aspects of a writer's life other than his purely literary work. For example, the student of Thackeray will find a discussion of that social critic's woodcuts and illustrations for *The Book of Snobs*. Edward Lear's paintings, Dante Gabriel Rossetti's pictorial art, and William Morris' furniture and tapestry designs are also described within these pages. The curious can find an excerpt from Joseph Jefferson's reminiscences on the preparation for his role as Rip Van Winkle in the dramatization of Washington Irving's classic tale. The interdisciplinary scholar will find material on Edmund Burke's Parliamentary speeches and Thomas Paine's revolutionary documents; on Sir John Vanbrugh's architectural achievements with Blenheim and Castle House; on Horace Walpole's obsession with Strawberry Hill; on William Cullen Bryant's editorship of *The New York Evening Post;* on Charles Dickens' reading tours and theatricals, and his trip to America; and on James Russell Lowell's teaching experiences at Harvard.

Among the discursive writers, historians, and scientists whose works have affected literature and who are here represented for study are John Wyclif, Thomas Fuller, John Locke, David Hume, Cotton Mather, Noah Webster, John James Audubon, Charles Darwin, Francis Parkman, Cardinal Newman, and Benjamin Jowett.

The pattern of the original Moulton has been continued. Only British and American authors are represented for discussion, but critics sound their thunder and subtle reign from all parts of the world. Writers under study are placed in chronological order of death, with the *Beowulf* writer(s?) initiating the work. For all writers a section on biography and on their writings is found. Individual works of major authors, in addition, are studied in detail. Dates of publication in all section heads have been amended where present scholarship demands a change, and new biographical information has been added where applicable. The student should observe that the present edition follows Moulton's listing of dates of composition rather than of publication when a wide disparity exists between the two.

Within the text, all titles have been placed in italics, except where they obviously refer to short pieces or to items in a collection. This procedure admittedly gives equality to book-length poems and to odes of folio-page size, but it reflects the editor's belief that each work under discussion is a unit and totality unto itself. Moulton's use of *Rev.* for Review, *Mag.* for Magazine, *s* for stanza, *ss* for stanzas, *l* for line, and *tr.* for translated by, has been retained, and the orthography and punctuation of the original

passages have been reprinted in keeping with the principles of historic and comparative study by which this present edition has been guided.

A word about these principles may be in order. The original Moulton, although at the beginning of the twentieth century considered an outstanding reference work and broad in its scope, is not by modern standards a work of consistent editorial excellence. Moulton often varied his form, normalizing the British spelling in one passage for the American consumption of his book, and permitting a British orthographic stance in another passage. The present edition has standardized much of this editorial matter but has allowed some few inconsistencies to remain. Any British or obsolete spellings have been reprinted on the principle that these were the correct and recognized spellings at the time.

Thus, such nineteenth-century spellings as the following have been retained, not for their flavor (which is by now distilled printers' wormwood) but for their reflection of turn-of-the-century norms: subtilest, secresy, highspirited, Shakspere, Shakspeare, Buonoparte, and premiss, among others. Quotation marks have also been left at the beginning and end of indented quotations (what is often referred to as "display quotation" form), a procedure that any prescriptive grammarian would rightly call anachronistic. The procedure here is repeated only to reflect what was at one time an accepted practice. So, too, are all letters, whether single ones or in collections, or even "epistles," notated in the source line as Moulton dictated them: in italics.

The principle is a plain and valid one: any student, through a judicious examination of the spelling and the grammatical practices in the passages reprinted here, can set his own course of comparative criticism. While this may not lead him into critical relativism, it certainly will dissuade him from adopting a set of rigid prescriptive laws. Like language, criticism is a living thing, thriving on the roots of usage, and it functions best when it is free to reconstruct its view without toppling the edifice of values on which it is built. Even the dictators and king-makers of the literary world, it is helpful to remember, were rarely consistent, dreading the day when their attitudes could be predicted.

The present edition was initiated in the double hope of bringing Moulton's work to a new generation of readers and of making his work more suited to contemporary tastes for those already acquainted with this valuable reference tool. Moulton's indefatigable efforts are well known to an earlier generation of readers, who have found in his studies and collections a mine of information and pleasure. His *Library of Literary Criticism,* originally published in eight volumes, is probably his best-known work, but many readers may also be familiar with his imaginative anthology of poetry, *In My Lady's Name,* and his *Doctor's Recreation Series.* As an editor and publisher of his own work, Moulton issued some 150 books

during his lifetime, from 1859 to 1913. He also found time to establish the first public library in Attica, New York, near his birthplace, Alexander, in Genesee County, and served as editor of *Literature* magazine, which he founded in 1881; and of *Queries,* from 1884 to 1889; and of *The Magazine of Poetry,* from 1889 to 1896. Moulton's standards remained those of a craftsman whose wide interests were always invigorated by the quest for intellectual stimulation. The present edition is issued in homage to that spirit and to that ideal of the continuing growth of human knowledge.

The information presented here is intended to provide an extensive guide for the high-school and college student, and a critical and bibliographic aid for the graduate student and scholar. Within these pages will be found the distinguished comments of all the major critics up to the twentieth century on all the major British and American writers from Beowulf to George Meredith. For diversion there are such comments as those by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert on their friend, Tennyson. The student can vicariously relive the excitement generated by the remarks of one kind of feminist, George Sand, on another kind, Harriet Beecher Stowe; he can experience the provocation of Robert Buchanan's inflammatory pamphlet on Swinburne, and Swinburne's reply. George Santayana talks here in measured tones of the achievement of Walt Whitman, and William Butler Yeats analyzes the work of William Morris, who influenced his early poetry. Henry James Sr. and Henry James Jr., Nathaniel Hawthorne, Walt Whitman, George Eliot, William Gladstone, Benjamin Disraeli, Hans Christian Andersen, Hermann Grimm, John Burroughs, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Woodrow Wilson are among the many critics found here who usually are not represented in histories of criticism.

And finally, but certainly not least of all, the lay reader, that wise, busy, striving, ambitious amateur, will find both pleasure and instruction before him in these pages. It may remind him again that literary progress, like all intellectual progress, is the result of tradition and nonconformity, of eccentricity and the principles of excellence.

I should like to express my gratitude to Long Island University for its concrete encouragement of my participation in this project.

MARTIN TUCKER

New York, 1966

OLD ENGLISH AND MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

BEOWULF

650-750?

The Beowulf MS. (Cotton Vitellius A. xv.) was one of those collected by Sir Robert Cotton. It was in Little Deans Yard, Westminster, when the fire which, in 1731, destroyed so many manuscripts took place, and was fortunately among those which were not fatally injured. In 1753, having spent some time in the old dormitory at Westminster, it was transferred to the British Museum. In 1705 Wanley, employed by Hickes, the Anglo-Saxon scholar, to make a catalogue of the old northern books in the kingdom, discovered the poem of Beowulf in the Cottonian library and calls it a *tractatus nobilissimus poeticè scriptus.* It is a parchment codex, and the handwriting of the two copyists is of the beginning of the tenth century. Thorkelin, a Danish scholar, had two copies of it made in 1786, and published the whole of it for the first time in 1815. This edition made the poem known, and it was discussed in English and foreign reviews. Meantime, in 1805, Sharon Turner gave the first account of the poem in his history of the Anglo-Saxons. Turner again, in 1823, and Conybeare, in 1826, filled up that account and translated portions of *Beowulf* into English verse, and in 1883 and 1837 John M. Kemble edited, with historical prefaces, and translated the whole of the poem. This scholarly book increased the interest of foreign scholars in the poem; and, since then, a great number of editions and translations have been published, while the essays, dissertations, articles, and notices on the poem and the subjects contained in it, fill a long list, and are written by English, French, German, Dutch, Danish, and American scholars.

Stopford A. Brooke, 1892, *The History of Early English Literature,* p. 12

SEE: *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg,* ed. Fr. Klaeber, 1922, Third Edition, 1936, Supplements 1941, 1950; *Beowulf: With the Finnsburg Fragment,* ed. Charles L. Wrenn, 1953, rev. 1958; R. W. Chambers, *Beowulf: An Introduction to the Study of the Poem with a Discussion of the Stories of Offa and Finn,* Third Edition, with a Supplement by C. L. Wrenn, 1959; *Beowulf, with a Transliteration and Notes* by Julius Zupitza, Second Edition (Facsimiles), 1959; Charles W. Kennedy, tr., *Beowulf, the Oldest English Epic, Translated into Alliterative Verse,* 1940; J. R. Clark, tr., *Beowulf and the Finnsburg Fragment,* rev. by Charles L. Wrenn, 1950 [prose]; Burton Raffel, tr., *Beowulf,* 1963; William P. Ker, *Epic and Romance,* Second Edition, 1908, repr. 1958; William W. Lawrence, *Beowulf and the Epic Tradition,* 1928; Rhys Carpenter, *Folk Tale, Fiction and Saga in the Homeric Epics,* 1946; D. Whitelock, *The Audience of "Beowulf",* 1951; A. J. Bliss, *The Metre of Beowulf,* 1958.

The plan . . . is sufficiently simple. The characters, as far as they are developed, are well sustained, and their speeches usually natural and well appropriated. The narrative is by no means so encumbered with repetitions as that of the reputed Cædmon; nor is the style so ambitious and inflated. Over the almost unintelligible rhapsodies of the Edda (for these are the fairest points of comparison) it possesses a decided superiority; nor are there many among the metrical romances of the more polished Normans, with which it may not fairly abide a competition.

John Josias Conybeare, 1826, *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, p. 81

One of the oldest and most important remains of Anglo-Saxon literature is the epic poem of *Beowulf*. Its age is unknown; but it comes from a very distant and hoar antiquity; somewhere between the seventh and tenth centuries. It is like a piece of ancient armor; rusty and battered, and yet strong. From within comes a voice sepulchral, as if the ancient armor spoke, telling a simple, straight-forward narrative; with here and there the boastful speech of a rough old Dane, reminding one of those made by the heroes of Homer. The style, likewise, is simple,—perhaps one should say, austere. The bold metaphors, which characterize nearly all the Anglo-Saxon poems we have read, are for the most part wanting in this. The author seems mainly bent upon telling us, how his Sea-Goth slew the Grendel and the Fire-drake. He is too much in earnest to multiply epithets and gorgeous figures. At times he is tedious; at times obscure; and he who undertakes to read the original will find it no easy task.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1845, *The Poets and Poetry of Europe*, p. 4

The Beowulf's-Lay, then, appears to me to have as good a Claim to be considered an original Work in its Present State as the Æneid of Virgil or indeed any Epic Poem in Existence. I conceive then that the Author was a Christian of this Country, and from the little Bits of Preaching that one meets with every here and there, and his References to the Sacred Volumes, I think it probable that he may have been an Ecclesiastic. . . . The Language of the Poem, again, does not appear to me to differ so much from that of King Ælfred, or of Cædmon, as to warrant our placing a very long Interval between the Productions: but it appears to forbid our considering it as belonging to the later Danish Dynasty of Cnut.

A. Diedrich Wackerbarth, 1847, ed. *Beowulf*, Introduction, p. xlv

With respect to this the oldest heroic poem in any Germanic tongue, my opinion is, that it is not an original production of the Anglo-Saxon muse, but a metrical paraphrase of an heroic Saga composed in the south-west of Sweden, in the old common language of the North, and probably brought to this country during the sway of the Danish dynasty . . . From the allusions to Christianity contained in the poem, I do not hesitate to regard it as a Christian paraphrase of a heathen Saga, and those allusions as interpolations of the paraphrast, whom I conceive to have been a native of England of Scandinavian parentage. As a monument of language the poem of Beowulf is highly valuable, but far more valuable is it as a vivid and faithful picture of old Northern manners and usages, as they existed in the halls of the kingly and the noble at the remote period to which it relates. In this respect, where are we to look for its like?

Benjamin Thorpe, 1855, *The Anglo-Saxon Poems of Beowulf, etc.,* Preface, pp. viii, ix

In the higher excellences of poetry, the celebrated epic, Beowulf, ranks perhaps first among the monuments of Anglo-Saxon literature, but in subject, plan, and treatment, it differs so widely from the general character of the versified compositions in the language, that it cannot be considered as a product of the same genius or the same influences which have given form and spirit to the other literary efforts of that people. . . . In its machinery, it has many points of resemblance to Scandinavian mythic poetry, and though there exists no Old-Northern poem of very similar character, there are prose sagas—generally indeed of much later date—which in tone and treatment are not unlike the story of Beowulf.

George P. Marsh, 1862, *The Origin and History of the English Language and of the Early Literature it Embodies,* p. 101

Although much of the poem of Beowulf is at best only legendary, and a great deal of it purely fabulous, there can be no doubt, I think, that we have, imbedded in the marvels and wild fancies of the story, a dim and vague but authentic record of the doings of our ancestors some fourteen centuries ago. . . . Its real value—considered as an historical authority merely—lies in the vivid picture it gives us of the life, the manners, and the habits of thought and speech of our forefathers in that "dark backward and abysm of time." We have it here at first hand, "proving," in Chapman's words,

"—how firm truth builds in poet's feigning;"

and it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that we may live with our ancestors and know them—which surely is the chief end of history—better in this poem than in all the bulky volumes of professed historians.

Lieut.-Col. H. W. Lumsden, 1881, ed. *Beowulf,* Introduction, p. v

There is speech from beginning to end; there is music; the minstrel sitting on the mead bench sings several noble lays. Our ears are deafened with the roar of talk; there are long orations; there is dramatic dialogue canto after canto. The very silence of the poem is a thunder, for through it we hear the tread of the dragon; the very darkness of it is like a vivid flash, for out of it leaps the figure of Grendel. Even the raven tells the eagle "how he joyed him in the feast when with the wolf he plundered the slain" (3027). The "storm of arrows," the "shower of iron," the din and friction of clashing weapons, horns and trumpets blowing their blasts, bring sharply before us more than a sound: they evoke a picture. All three fights with the dragons are tempests in words. All the people are loud-voiced; there are joyous welcomes and partings; the "glee-beam," the "music-wood" soften or stir the hearts of the feasting watchers as they keep the vigil. There is no noiseless wassailing or shadow-drinking in pantomime.

James A. Harrison, 1884, "Old Teutonic Life in Beowulf," *Overland Monthly*, 2nd S., vol. 4, p. 21

If we want to feel whether *Beowulf* is good poetry or not, let us place ourselves in the hall as evening draws on, when the benches are filled with warriors and seamen, and the chief sits in the high seat, and the fires flame in the midst, and the cup goes round—and then hear the Shaper strike the harp. With gesture, with the beat of his voice and of the hand upon his instrument at each alliterative word of the saga, he sings of the great fight with Grendel or the dragon, of Hrothgar's giving, of the sea-voyage, to men who had themselves fought against desperate odds, to sailors who knew the storms, to the fierce rovers of the deep, to great ealdormen who ruled their freemen, to thegns who followed their kings to battle and would die rather than break the bond of comradeship. Then as we image this, and read the accented verse, sharply falling and rising with the excitement of the thing recorded, we understand how good the work is, how fitted for its time and place, how national, how full of noble pleasure.

Stopford A. Brooke, 1892, *The History of Early English Literature*, p. 73

The manuscript itself, the handwriting of which is probably of the tenth century, affords, apart from that fact, no presumption as to the date of the poem. It is a bad transcript of a work the language of which the scribe seems to have imperfectly understood, and hence to have in many places hopelessly misrepresented; and the interval in time between the transcript and the original composition may have been indefinitely great. . . . Briefly summarised, the views here suggested as to the authorship of *Beowulf* may

be stated thus: Sagas, either in the Danish dialect or in that of the Geatas—more probably the latter—were current in the Scandinavian countries in the seventh century. Among these Sagas, that of Beowulf the Great must have had a prominent place; others celebrated Hygelac his uncle, Hnæf the Viking, the wars of the Danes and the Heaðobards, of the Danes and the Swedes, etc., etc. About the end of the century missioners from England are known to have been busy in Friesland and Denmark, endeavouring to convert the natives to Christianity. Some one of these, whose mind had a turn for literature, and dwelt with joy among the traditions of the past, collected or learnt by heart a number of these Sagas, and taking that of Beowulf as a basis, and weaving many others into his work, composed an epic poem of upwards of three thousand lines, to which, although it contains the record of two, or rather of three adventures, the heroic scale of the figure who accomplishes them all imparts a real unifying epic interest. The poet who, returning to England, gave this work to his countrymen, cannot at present be identified. It was not Cynewulf; style, tone, and tendency are all so different, that this solution, in my opinion at least, must be decisively rejected. Nor was it, for the reasons that have been given, the author of *Andreas*; nor, most certainly, was it the author of *Guðlac*. A fresh, searching examination of the entire mass of Anglo-Saxon poetry, with a view to the solution of this one question—Who wrote *Beowulf*?—must be made, before the problem can be put aside as insoluble. Such an examination, if not undertaken in England, will doubtless be ultimately carried out by some scholar of a Swedish or German university.

Thomas Arnold, 1898, *Notes on Beowulf*, pp. 3, 129

If we take into consideration the fact, which is all but a certain fact, that *Beowulf* is the very oldest poem of any size and scope in any modern language, that it has no known predecessors, and has the whole literature of romance for successors—then without attributing to it merits which it cannot claim, or muddling it up with myths which simply minish its interest, we shall see that it is a very venerable document indeed, well worth the envy of the nations to whom it does not belong. Even if it were no older than its MS., *Beowulf* would be the senior of the *Chanson de Roland* by nearly a century, the senior of the *Poema del Cid* by two, the senior of the *Nibelungen Lied* by two or three. In reality it is possibly the elder of the eldest of these by half a millennium. Some of those who love England least have been fain to admit that we have the best poetry in Europe; it is thanks mainly to *Beowulf* that our poetry can claim the oldest lineage, and poetical coat-armour from the very first.

George Saintsbury, 1898, *A Short History of English Literature*, p. 6

CAEDMON

fl. 657-680

> The poetical works which now bear Caedmon's name received that name from Junius, the first editor, in 1655, on the ground of the general agreement of the subjects with Bede's description of Caedmon's works. In this book we find a first part containing the most prominent narratives from the books of Genesis, Exodus, and Daniel; and a second part containing the Descent of Christ into Hades and the delivery of the patriarchs from their captivity, according to the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus and the constant legend of the Middle Ages. This comprises a kind of Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained. Of all this, the part which has attracted most notice is a part of which the materials are found neither in Scripture nor in any known Apocrypha. The nearest approximation yet indicated is in the hexameters of Avitus.
>
> John Earle, 1884, *Anglo-Saxon Literature*, p. 111

> The original MS. of the poem, preserved in the Bodleian Library, is a small parchment volume in folio, containing two hundred and twenty-nine pages; the first two hundred and twelve of which are written in a fair, though not elegant hand, apparently of the tenth century. The remaining seventeen pages, forming a Second Book, are in an inferior handwriting; and as the orthography used in this part of the poem is less pure, and the language less grammatical than in the first part, it is perhaps to be considered as less ancient. Of the history of this MS. nothing more, I believe, is known, than that it was the property of Archbishop Usher, who presented it to Junius, by whom, with the rest of his MSS., it was bequeathed to the Bodleian Library. This work . . . was first given to the world by the learned foreigner above named, in a small quarto, printed at Amsterdam in 1655, containing the Saxon text, unaccompanied by translation or notes.
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> Benjamin Thorpe, 1832, *Caedmon's Metrical Paraphrase*, Translator's Preface, p. ix

SEE: Vol. I, *The Junius Manuscript*, of *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, ed. George P. Krapp and Elliott V. K. Dobbie, 1931-1953, 6 v.; *Hymn*, in *Three Northumbrian Poems*, ed. A. H. Smith, 1933; *The Later Genesis: Edited from Manuscript Junius II*, ed. Benno J. Timmer, 1948, rev. 1954; *The Cædmon Poems*, tr. Charles W. Kennedy, 1916; Charles L. Wrenn, *The Poetry of Cædmon*, 1948.

There was in this abbess's* monastery a certain brother, particularly remarkable for the grace of God, who was wont to make pious and religious verses, so that whatever was interpreted to him out of Scripture, he soon after put the same into poetical expressions of much sweetness and humility, in English, which was his native language. By his verses the minds of many were often excited to despise the world, and to aspire to heaven. Others after him attempted, in the English nation, to compose religious poems, but none

*Hilda.

could ever compare with him, for he did not learn the art of poetry from men, but from God; for which reason he never could compose any trivial or vain poem, but only those which relate to religion suited his religious tongue.

Bede, 731, *Ecclesiastical History,* bk. iv, ch. xxiv, (A.D. 680), ed. Giles

Cædmon, of whom we have heard so much, was one of those gifted men, who have stamped deeply and lastingly upon the literature of their country, the impress of their own mind and feelings. He was the first Englishman—it may be, the first individual of Gothic race—who exchanged the gorgeous images of the old mythology for the chaster beauties of Christian poetry. From the sixth to the twelfth century, he appears to have been the great model, whom all imitated, and few could equal. For upwards of five centuries, he was the father of English poetry; and when his body was discovered in the reign of John, it seems to have excited no less reverence than those of the kings and saints by which it was surrounded. Nothing shows more clearly the influence which this extraordinary man exerted upon our national modes of thought and expression, than a comparison between the Anglo-Saxon and early Icelandic literatures. So striking is the contrast, both as to style and subject, that Rask has even ventured to maintain they were radically distinct. A better knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon would have shown him his mistake. But though it might easily be proved, that our fathers had poems on almost all the subjects which were once thought peculiar to the Eddas, yet the remains of them are so scanty, or the allusions to them so ambiguous, as rather to baffle criticism, than to enlighten it. The revolution effected by Cædmon appears to have been complete.

Edwin Guest, 1838, *A History of English Rhythms,* vol. II, p. 23

The type of the Anglo-Saxon religious poetry was Cædmon, who, according to the legend, received miraculously in a dream the gift of song. We are far from believing, as some have wished to explain the matter, that this miracle really occurred, and that it may be accounted for naturally, on the presumption of the simple and easy construction of Anglo-Saxon verse. On the contrary, that Cædmon's poems were exceedingly beautiful we have Bede's own testimony, a man well skilled in and much attached to the poetry of his forefathers; and that they were by no means easy to compose, we may be convinced by a comparison of the older religious poetry with that which was certainly written at a later period, (when the minstrel, though he still existed, was no more the same personage he had been,) such as the metrical translations from Boethius attributed to King Alfred. The terms in which Bede

speaks of the miracle, show how extraordinary it appeared to those who lived at the time, that one who had not been taught the profession of poetry, should be able to compose like a regular bard. All, indeed, that we are justified in concluding from this story is, that Cædmon was considered to be so far superior to his contemporaries in the same art, that it required (as has often been the case under similar circumstances) the formation of a particular legend to account for it.

Thomas Wright, 1842, *Biographia Britannica Literaria,* vol. I, p. 19

His style not unfrequently is meagre and flat; his epithets have the Homeric vagueness of idea, and precision of application, which belong to an early literature; the reflections are often commonplace. . . . The style of Milton is no doubt unapproachable; but the mere story, as told by Cædmon, has been less hampered by theological difficulties, and is freer and grander than the Puritan poem.

Charles H. Pearson, 1867, *History of England During the Early and Middle Ages,* vol. I, pp. 298, 300

Drawing epic, lyrical, didactic matter into its domain Cædmon's poetry seems, according to Bede's account, to have embraced all classes, and most of the range of material to which the Old English religious poetry is in any sense congenial. The question is pertinent if, of the numerous works of Cædmon, nothing besides that short hymn is preserved; if among the considerable remnants of the older ecclesiastical literature, the majority of which have reached us without the names of their authors, one or more are not to be traced to Cædmon. To this inquiry there is no satisfactory answer. It has been customary, since the time of Junius, to connect the poems contained in the Bodleian manuscript, Jun. XI, with Cædmon's name, but belief in the authority for this has been more and more abandoned. In the course of time an ever greater variety of elements and diversity of style have been discovered in the contents of that codex; and at present hardly any one feels justified in ascribing even a part of it to the most ancient Christian poet of England.

Bernhard Ten Brink, 1877-83, *History of English Literature, (To Wiclif)* tr. Kennedy, p. 40

In regard of his origin and idiosyncrasy Cædmon is rather the prototype of a modern people-poet like Burns: the one summoned from the oxstall, the other from the plough, to tell of the things of the spirit; both humble in birth and occupation, and with distinct folk-traits and sympathies. The Whitby poet sings in strong, sweet speech of the Israelitish quest of the

Promised Land, or of such stirring happenings as those which centre around Judith as protagonist. And throughout his Bible-inspired epics it is curious to see the moody earnestness of the Saxon merged in the solemn, mystic-dreamy, or jubilant joy of the neophyte; this blend of character and influence coloring the touches of nature as it does other phases of the work. His verses are paraphrase in the broadest, freest sense. When so the singer wills, he expands, interpolates, introduces so much of local color that the composition comes to have independent and creative worth.

Richard Burton, 1898, *Literary Likings,* p. 206

JOHN WYCLIF
1320(?)-1384

Born, 1320(?). Educated at Oxford. Fellow, and afterwards Master of Balliol Coll. Rector of Fillingham, 1361-69; Rector of Ludgershall, 1369-74. D.D., Oxford, 1370. Rector of Lutterworth, 1374-84. Attended conference with Papal Legates at Bruges, 1375. Accused of heresy, 1377 and 1378. Forbidden to lecture at Oxford, 1381. Again accused of heresy, 1382. Engaged on English translation of Bible, from 1382. Died, at Lutterworth, 31 Dec. 1384. Buried there. WORKS: Wyclif's translation of the Bible was published complete, ed. by J. Forshall and Sir F. Madden (4 vols.), 1850; *Select English Works,* ed. by T. Arnold (3 vols.), 1869-71; *English Works hitherto unprinted,* ed. by F. D. Matthew, 1880.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 306

SEE: *John Wyclif. Select English Works,* ed. H. E. Winn, 1929; R. W. Chambers, *On the Continuity of English Prose,* in Chambers's edition of Nicholas Harpsfield, *Life and Death of Sir Thomas Moore, Knight,* 1932; G. M. Trevelyan, *England in the Age of Wycliffe,* 1900, Third Edition; H. B. Workman, *John Wyclif,* 1926, 2 v.

PERSONAL

By the institution of many, if they are indeed worthy of belief, deploring it deeply, it has come to our ears that John de Wycliffe, rector of the church of Lutterworth, in the diocese of Lincoln, Professor of the Sacred Scriptures, (would that he were not also Master of Errors,) has fallen into such a detestable madness that he does not hesitate to dogmatize and publicly preach, or rather vomit forth from the recesses of his breast certain propositions and conclusions which are erroneous and false. He has cast himself also into the depravity of preaching heretical dogmas which strive to subvert and weaken the state of the whole church and even secular polity, some of which doctrines, in changed terms, it is true, seem to express the perverse opinions

and unlearned learning of Marsilio of Padua of cursed memory, and of John of Jandun, whose book is extant, rejected and cursed by our predecessor, Pope John XXII, of happy memory. This he has done in the kingdom of England, lately glorious in its power and in the abundance of its resources, but more glorious still in the glistening piety of its faith, and in the distinction of its sacred learning; producing also many men illustrious for their exact knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, mature in the gravity of their character, conspicuous in devotion, defenders of the Catholic church. He has polluted certain of the faithful of Christ by besprinkling them with these doctrines, and led them away from the right paths of the aforesaid faith to the brink of perdition. . . . Moreover, you are on our authority to arrest the said John, or cause him to be arrested and to send him under a trustworthy guard to our venerable brother, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Bishop of London, or to one of them. . . . Given at Rome, at Santa Maria Maggiore, on the 31st of May, the sixth year of our pontificate.

Gregory XI, 1378, *Bull Against John Wycliffe, England in the Time of Wycliffe,* ed. Cheyney, pp. 11, 12

Hitherto the corpse of John Wickliffe had quietly slept in his grave, about one-and-forty years after his death, till his body was reduced to bones, and his bones almost to dust. For though the earth in the chancel of Lutterworth in Leicestershire, where he was interred, hath not so quick a digestion with the earth of Aceldama, to consume flesh in twenty-four hours, yet such the appetite thereof, and all other English graves, to leave small reversions of a body after so many years. But now, such the spleen of the council of Constance, as they not only cursed his memory, as dying an obstinate heretic, but ordered that his bones (with this charitable caution, "if it may be discerned from the bodies of other faithful people,") to be taken out of the ground, and thrown far off from any Christian burial. In obedience hereunto, Richard Fleming, bishop of Lincoln, diocesan of Lutterworth, sent his officers (vultures with a quick sight scent at a dead carcase) to ungrave him accordingly. To Lutterworth they come, Sumner, Commissary, Official, Chancellor, Proctors, Doctors, and the servants (so that the remnant of the body would not hold out a bone, amongst so many hands) take what was left out of the grave, and burnt them to ashes, and cast them into Swift, a neighbouring brook running hard by. Thus this brook hath conveyed his ashes into Avon, Avon into Severn, Severn into the narrow seas, they into the main ocean. And thus the ashes of Wickliffe are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed all the world over.

Thomas Fuller, 1655, *The Church History of Britain,* bk. iv, sec. ii, par. 51-3

The world lost in him one of the most sturdy heroes that the fruitful soil of England ever bore. The reformer of the fourteenth century does not belie his origin; we see it in that practical tendency which, with all his idealism, pulsates through his veins; in that measured boldness which marks all his doings. The great reformers of the sixteenth century throw his figure somewhat into the shade. Wyclif does not possess the genial vein of a Luther, nor the stern greatness of a Calvin. He does not rouse our enthusiasm like the former, nor impress us with fearful admiration like the latter. But he is, perhaps, better balanced than either, and unites many of their excellences in a less degree; the impression he produces is therefore weaker and less direct. On his contemporaries his personality exercised an irresistible fascination; but it is only, as it were, indirectly and by reflection that we can appreciate Wyclif to-day, while the names of Luther and Calvin arouse our imagination at once. In commendation of his character it is sufficient to say that he was one of the most moral, active, and courageous men that ever lived.

Bernhard Ten Brink, 1892, *History of English Literature (Wyclif, Chaucer, Earliest Drama, Renaissance),* tr. Robinson, p. 29

Translation of the Bible

This Master John Wyclif translated into the Anglic—not Angelic—tongue, the Gospel that Christ gave to the clergy and the doctors of the Church, that they might minister it gently to laymen and weaker persons, according to the exigence of their time, their personal wants, and the hunger of their minds; whence it is made vulgar by him, and more open to the reading of laymen and women than it usually is to the knowledge of lettered and intelligent clergy; and thus the pearl of the Gospel is cast forth and trodden under feet of swine.

Henry Knighton, 1395(?), *Decem Scriptores X,* ed. Twysden, col. 2664

It is a dangerous thing to translate the text of Holy Scripture out of one tongue into another. . . . We therefore decree and ordain, that no man henceforth by his own authority translate any text of the Scriptures into English or any other tongue by way of a book, pamphlet, or treatise; and that no man read any such book, pamphlet, or treatise, now lately composed in the time of Wyclif . . . upon pain of the greater excommunication, until the said translation be approved by the ordinary of the place, or, if the case so require, by the council provincial.

Convocation of Oxford, 1408

One of the most important effects produced by the Wycliffite versions on the English language is . . . the establishment of what is called the sacred or religious dialect, which was first fixed in those versions, and has, with little variation, continued to be the language of devotion and of scriptural translation of the present day. . . . In fact, so much of the Wycliffite sacred dialect is retained in the standard version, that though a modern reader may occasionally be embarrassed by an obsolete word, idiom, or spelling, which occurs in Wycliffe's translation, yet if the great reformer himself were now to be restored to life, he would probably be able to read our common Bible from beginning to end, without having to ask the explanation of a single passage.

George P. Marsh, 1862, *The Origin and History of the English Language, etc.*, pp. 365, 370

Wyclif's translations of the Scriptures, as well as those of his time generally, were themselves made from a translation, the Vulgate of Jerome. Even if he had understood Greek,—he occasionally uses Greek words,—it is not likely that he could have found, in all England, a copy of the Greek Testament accessible, from which to make his translation. Copies of the New Testament manuscripts, and other manuscripts in Greek, were almost unknown in Western Europe until the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1543, and the consequent diffusion of Greek learning by the wide dispersion of Greek fugitives. The Hebrew of the Old Testament, too, was only known through the same Latin version. . . . Without doubt Wyclif used the text of the Vulgate current in his time, but, as we have reason to believe, in connection with it, he also collated such scanty Latin manuscript copies as were accessible. Considerable evidence has been adduced to show that he used a text which appeared to him after a comparison of old copies to be on the whole the most correct.

Edwin Cone Bissell, 1873, *The Historic Origin of the Bible*, pp. 11, 12

The two great authors of this time are Wycliffe and Chaucer; and their influence upon the language cannot well be overestimated. To the translation of the Scriptures, completed about 1380 by the former and his disciples, we owe that peculiar religious dialect, alike remarkable for simplicity, for beauty, and for force, which we still see preserved in the more modern versions of the Bible, and which renders the prose of that work distinct from every other existing form of English prose. It is only through this translation that Wycliffe can be said to have exerted a lasting influence upon our tongue.

Thomas R. Lounsbury, 1879, *History of the English Language*, p. 57

General

He was indeed a man of massy, voluminous, and subtle knowledge; one who, with the intellectual sinews and skill to win the unbloody crown of the athlete, chose rather the sweat and toil and peril of the militant soldier. He had all the learning and agility of mind required for the calm contentions of libraries and colleges, so fruitful at that period in power and worldly honour. But did he, like so many among his contemporaries, thus employ his talents? Where shall we find, in any age or country, amongst the lowest ranks of vulgar fanaticism, a man more zealous to encourage and animate the consciences of the poor and ignorant? Is it not admirable to see that he, the doctor and philosopher of the old schools, introduced into the church the practice of that diligent and, as it were, rustic preaching, so especially designed and fitted to enlighten the lowly mass of the people? Nor was this adaptation of his own great mind to the needs of the weakest a small sacrifice in Wycliffe. For it is clear from his writings that, if ever there was any one who delighted in long and difficult trains of reasoning for their own sake, as giving pleasurable exercise to his faculties,—who loved to busy himself in the building up and compacting of scientific knowledge,—he was the man. Yet through these fine and immense webs of reasoning, how lion-like does he constantly break forth with some bold, direct appeal to that moral sense, which is the great practical standard of truth!

John Sterling, 1829, "Shades of the Dead," *Essays and Tales*, ed. Hare, vol. I, p. 39

It is easy to mark the faults in his character. They are obvious on the face of his own works. Wyclif's writings are often deformed by intemperate and violent expressions, though never exhibiting the coarse savagery, with which, a century and a half afterwards, Luther and his contemporaries carried on their literary warfare. He was also in his controversial treatises somewhat given to mystical and far-fetched Biblical expositions and metaphors; although he recognised and enforced on others the principle of adhering to the grammatical and historical sense of texts, and of extreme caution in imposing a meaning on Scripture, which the Holy Spirit does not clearly command. The "root and branch" spirit, with which he assails existing institutions, appears sometimes to show a love of destruction, rather than a wish for reform.

Sir Edward S. Creasy, 1870, *History of England*, vol. II, pp. 308, 329

The career of Wycliff, indeed, belongs to the University quite as much as to the Church. It was as the last of the Oxford schoolmen, and mostly from Oxford itself, that he put forth his series of books and pamphlets on the

relations of Church and State, on the subjection of the clergy to civil rule, civil taxation and civil tribunals, on pardons, indulgences, the worship of saints, transubstantiation, the supremacy of Holy Scripture, and other like topics, besides those abstruse scholastic themes which have lost their interest for the present age. During his earlier struggles, the open patronage of John of Gaunt, with the occasional protection of the Court, stood him in good stead, and enabled him to brave not only episcopal censures but Papal anathemas. His real strength, however, consisted in the influence which he commanded in the University itself and, through it, in the English people. . . . The spirit which he had kindled continued to animate the University for many years after his death. In Merton College alone several eminent fellows were known as Wycliffites in the next generation, and after the condemnation of Lollardism by the Council of London in 1411, it was thought necessary to pass a stringent University statue to check the propagation of Lollard doctrines. By this statue, the penalty of the greater excommunication was imposed upon all who should disseminate Lollardism, candidates for degrees were required to abjure it, and heads of colleges or halls were enjoined to exclude from their societies any person even suspected of it.

George C. Brodrick, 1886, *A History of the University of Oxford*, pp. 35, 36

Comparing Wycliffe's style with that of the book of travels to which the name of Mandeville is attached, we see at once that his English is that of a scholar who has lost much of what may be called the childishness of archaicism, and who is ready to enrich his language with words borrowed freely either from a French or a classical source. We recognise that we are in the hands of one who, though he has nothing that could fairly be called a formed style, yet uses the direct and forcible English of a master, and whose example could not fail to influence the future of English prose.

Henry Craik, 1893, *English Prose*, vol. I, p. 28

As regards his attitude toward the fine arts, Wyclif was no iconoclast: in his *Trialogus* an approved speaker points out that Christ did not condemn signs in themselves, but only abuse of them; the brazen serpent, the crucified Lord himself, were both signs. Nevertheless, in Wyclif's nature the moral element was developed to the sacrifice of the ideal: his intense seriousness, his fear lest symbols should become to the simple occasions of idolatry, made him suspicious of the use of the arts in the service of the sanctuary, while his deep sympathy with the poor made him intolerant of the diversion of wealth that would relieve their necessities to the production of works of art.

Greenough White, 1895, *Outline of the Philosophy of English Literature, The Middle Ages*, p. 96

The interest which attaches to Wycliffe has grown deeper in recent years, as his writings have been more clearly studied, and especially his unpublished manuscripts. A sense of the greatness of his personality has increased, of his representative character as a comprehensive mind in whom his age found its most ample reflection. He went deeper also than his contemporaries could follow; indeed, his principles seem to ally him with the modern socialistic conception of reform. He appears at times to be one-sided and extreme in his passionate opposition to great evils imbedded in corporate ecclesiastical institutions. He was claimed by the later Puritans as their forerunner and representative, because of his principle of the parity of the ministry, and for other reasons, but in reality he belonged to another cause, the sacredness of the state and its organic relation to the church—that doctrine which has been the mainspring of what is highest and most attractive in English history, which was reaffirmed with deeper emphasis at the Reformation, and which still survives in the English Church, as one source of its strength, as that which differentiates it to some extent in principle from the other Protestant churches.

Alexander V. G. Allen, 1897, *Christian Institutions,* p. 264

JOHN BARBOUR

1316?-1395

The father of Scottish poetry and history, was born about 1316; paid several visits to England and France; and was Archdeacon of Aberdeen from 1357, or earlier, till his death, on 13th March 1395. His national epic, *The Brus,* first printed at Edinburgh in 1571, has been reprinted by Dr. Jamieson in 1820; by Cosmo Innes, for the Spalding Club, in 1856; and by Professor Skeat, for the Early English Text Society, in 1870-77, and the Scottish Text Society in 1893-94. Of the *Legends of the Saints,* unearthed by Mr. Bradshaw in the Cambridge University Library, and doubtfully ascribed to him, there is a German edition by Horstmann (2 vols. Heilbronn, 1881-82), and one by Metcalfe for the Scottish Text Society (1887-89).

Patrick and Groome, eds., 1897, *Chambers's Biographical Dictionary,* p. 67

SEE: *The Bruce,* ed. Walter W. Skeat, 1870; George Neilson, *John Barbour: Poet and Translator,* 1900.

Perhaps the editor may be accused of nationality, when he says that, taking the total merits of this work together, he prefers it to the early exertions of even the Italian muse, to the melancholy sublimity of Dante, and the amorous quaintness of Petrarca, as much as M. Le Grand does a *fabliau* to a Provençal ditty. Here indeed the reader will find few of the graces of fine

poetry, little of the Attic dress of the muse: but here are life, and spirit, and ease, and plain sense, and pictures of real manners, and perpetual incident, and entertainment. The language is remarkably good for the time, and far superior, in neatness and elegance, even to that of Gawin Douglas, who wrote more than a century after. But when we consider that our author is not only the first poet, but the earliest historian of Scotland, who has entered into any detail, and from whom any view of the real state and manners of the country can be had; and that the hero, whose life he paints so minutely, was a monarch equal to the greatest of modern times; let the historical and poetical merits of his work be weighed together, and then opposed to those of any other early poet of the present nations in Europe.

John Pinkerton, 1790, ed. *The Bruce of John Barbour,* **Preface, p. x**

Fortunate in the choice of a subject, he has unfolded a series of remarkable events, and has diffused over a very long narrative that lively interest which an ordinary writer is incapable of exciting. Here we are not to expect the blandishments of modern poetry: the author stands conspicuous amid the ruins of time, and, like an undecayed Gothic tower, presents an aspect of majestic simplicity. The lively strain of his narrative, the air of sincerity which he always exhibits, his earnest participation in the success or sufferings of his favourite characters, as well as the splendid attributes of the characters themselves, cannot fail of arresting the attention of every reader familiarly acquainted with the language in which he writes.

David Irving, 1861, *History of Scotish Poetry,* ed. Carlyle, p. 101

Throughout his long work he shows, for his time, a very remarkable feeling of the *art* of poetry, both by the variety which he studies in the disposition and treatment of his subject, and by the rare temperance and self-restraint which prevents him from ever overdoing what he is about either by prosing or raving. Even his patriotism, warm and steady as it is, is wholly without any vulgar narrowness or ferocity: he paints the injuries of his country with distinctness and force, and celebrates the heroism of her champions and deliverers with all admiration and sympathy; but he never runs into either the gasconading exaggerations or the furious deprecatory invectives which would, it might be thought, have better pleased the generality of those for whom he wrote. His understanding was too enlightened, and his heart too large, for that. His poem stands in this respect in striking contrast to that of Harry, the blind minstrel, on the exploits of Wallace; . . . but each poet suited his hero,—Barbour, the magnanimous, considerate, and far-seeing king; Blind Harry, the indomitable popular champion, with his one passion

and principle, hatred of the domination of England, occupying his whole soul and being.

George L. Craik, 1861, *A Compendious History of English Literature and of the English Language,* vol. I, p. 349

Barbour's poem has always been admired for its strict accuracy of statement, to which Bower, Wynton, Hailes, Pinkerton, Jamieson, and Sir Walter Scott all bear testimony; for the picturesque force of its natural descriptions; for its insight into character, and the lifelike spirit of its individual sketches; for the martial vigour of its battle-pictures; for the enthusiasm which he feels, and makes his reader feel, for the valiant and wise, the sagacious and persevering, the bold, merciful, and religious character of its hero, and for the piety which pervades it, and proves that the author was not merely a churchman in profession, but a Christian at heart. Its defects of rude rhythm, irregular constructions, and obsolete phraseology, are those of its age; but its beauties, its unflagging interest, and its fine poetic spirit, are characteristic of the writer's own genius.

George Gilfillan, 1860, *Specimens With Memoirs of the Less-Known British Poets,* vol. I, p. 19

The *Legends of the Saints* demand concessions from us much more frequently than *The Bruce* and, indeed, concessions of various kinds—to the spirit of the age in which the poem originated, to the power of tradition which even the most gifted poet cannot ignore, and to the various influences and conditions which compel him to accept all manner of things not adapted to poetry, even things that are insipid. It is saying a good deal that we are able to recognize in these religious epics the patriotic singer of the war of independence. It is not the inevitable defects attached to the poetry, but its great merits, that should excite our astonishment. Barbour, as a very old man, thus created a work which far surpassed almost everything of its kind that English literature had to show, and, indeed, he was not surpassed in this domain even at a later date. Huchown in his "Susannah" exhibits greater brilliancy of diction, Chaucer's "Cecilia" more completely captivates our ear by the pleasant sound of its strophes; but, as a whole, it will be found that Barbour's simple as well as vivid form of representation corresponds best with the character of the genus, and that it is the only form which can be carried out successfully, especially in poems of longer effort or in compilations. . . . English literature—and, indeed, Scottish literature —can show no more brilliant figure or richer nature than his.

Bernhard Ten Brink, 1892, *History of English Literature, (Fourteenth Century to Surrey),* tr. Schmitz, pp. 60, 61.

During all last century, despite the various editions of Barbour, it was Blind Harry who was the favourite, and even if we admit that this was because he could be read in the modernized version by Hamilton of Gilbertfield, yet there must be some merit in a poem which could go through this process and yet live. The work it did during two generations in fostering Scottish patriotism and developing Scottish character is well known from the testimony of Burns. Barbour, on the other hand, was scarcely known, and this cannot have come altogether from the difference in language, but must have been also due to the difference in the good Archdeacon's idea of a national poem. With the critical study of Scottish history begins the above-mentioned confusion between the merits of a poem and the truth of its historical basis, and straightway Barbour begins to supplant Blind Harry in the favour of the critics. As no one will venture to quote the latter as an authority for anything, so writers on literature, whether English literature in general or Scottish in particular, dispose of their best epithets on Barbour, and apologetically give their remaining one to Blind Harry, if indeed they do not leave him only the disparaging ones.

W. A. Craigie, 1893, "Barbour and Blind Harry as Literature," *Scottish Review*, vol. 22, p. 175

WILLIAM LANGLAND

C. 1332-1400?

Langland, Langelande, or Longland, William: author; born probably at Cleobury Mortimer, Shropshire, England, about 1332; was educated at Oxford; became a fellow of Oriel College, and a tonsured clerk at Malvern. His *Vision of Piers Plowman*, in alliterative verse, written about 1362, was a religious and moral allegory, containing much satire upon ecclesiastical corruption and the social abuses of the time. It was originally in eight divisions, or "passus," to which was added a continuation in three parts, *Vita Do Wel, Do Bet and Do Best*. About 1377 the whole was greatly enlarged by the author. The best edition is that of W. W. Skeat (four parts with glossary 1867-84; another edition in 2 vols., 1886). Langland died about 1400.

Henry A. Beers, rev. 1897, *Johnson's Universal Cyclopoedia*, vol. v, p. 87

SEE: *'Piers the Plowman': A Critical Edition of the A-Version*, ed. T. A. Knott and D. C. Fowler, 1952; *Piers Plowman: The A-Version*, ed. George A. Kane, 1960; *The Book Concerning Piers the Plowman*, tr. Donald and Rachel Attwater, 1957 [translation of B-text into modern English alliterative verse]; E. Talbot Donaldson, *Piers Plowman, the C-Text and Its Poet*, 1949; D. W. Robertson and B. R. Huppé, *'Piers Plowman' and the Scriptural Tradition*, 1951; A. G. Mitchell, *Lady Meed and the Art of 'Piers Plowman'*, 1956; George Kane, *Piers Plowman, The Evidence for Authorship*, 1965.

Vision of Piers Plowman

We may justly cõiect therfore y^{t} it was firste written about two hundred yeres paste, in the tyme of Kynge Edwarde the thyrde. In whose tyme it pleased God to open the eyes of many to se hys truth, geuing them boldenes of herte, to open their mouthes and crye oute agaynste the worckes of darckenes, as did Iohn wicklefe, who also in those dayes translated the holye Bible into the Englishe tonge, and this writer who in reportynge certaine visions and dreames, that he fayned him selfe to haue dreamed: doeth moste christianlye enstruct the weake, and sharply rebuke the obstinate blynde. There is no maner of vice, that reigneth in anye estate of men, whiche this wryter hath not godly, learnedlye, and wittilye, rebuked. He wrote altogyther in miter: but not after y^{e} maner of our rimers that write nowe adayes (for his verses ende not alike) but the nature of hys miter is, to haue thre wordes at the leaste in euery verse whiche beginne with some one letter. . . . Loke not vpon this boke therfore, to talke of wonders paste or to come, but to amende thyne owne misse, which thou shalt fynd here moste charitably rebuked. The spirite of god gyue the grace to walke in the waye of truthe, to Gods glory, & thyne owne soules healthe. So be it.

Robert Crowley, 1550, ed. *The Vision of Pierce Plowman,*
The Printer to the Reader

In hys dooinges is somewhat harshe and obscure, but indeede a very pithy wryter, and (to hys commendation I speake it) was the first that I have seene, that observed ye quantity of our verse without the curiosity of Ryme.

William Webbe, 1586, *A Discourse of English Poetrie,*
Arber ed., p. 32

The metre of Pierce Plowman's Visions has no kind of affinity with what is commonly called Blank Verse; yet has it a sort of harmony of its own, proceeding not so much from its alliteration, as from the artful disposal of its cadence, and the contrivance of its pause; so that when the ear is a little accustomed to it, it is by no means unpleasing; but claims all the merit of the French heroic numbers, only far less polished; being sweetened, instead of their final rhymes, with the internal recurrence of similar sounds.

Thomas Percy, 1765, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry,*
2nd S., bk. iii, pt. i

Instead of availing himself of the rising and rapid improvements of the English language, Longland prefers and adopts the style of the Anglo-Saxon poets. Nor did he make these writers the models of his language only: he likewise imitates their alliterative versification, which consisted in using an

aggregate of words beginning with the same letter. He has therefore rejected rhyme, in the place of which he thinks it sufficient to substitute a perpetual alliteration. But this imposed constraint of seeking identical initials, and the affectation of obsolete English, by demanding a constant and necessary departure from the natural and obvious forms of expression, while it circumscribed the powers of our author's genius, contributed also to render his manner extremely perplexed, and to disgust the reader with obscurities.

Thomas Warton, 1778-1781, *The History of English Poetry*

His style, even making allowance for its antiquity, has a vulgar air, and seems to indicate a mind that would have been coarse, though strong, in any state of society. But, on the other hand, his work, with all its tiresome homilies, illustrations from school divinity, and uncouth phraseology, has some interesting features of originality. He employs no borrowed materials; he is the earliest of our writers in whom there is a tone of moral reflection; and his sentiments are those of bold and solid integrity. The zeal of truth was in him; and his vehement manner sometimes rises to eloquence, when he denounces hypocrisy and imposture. The mind is struck with his rude voice, proclaiming independent and popular sentiments, from an age of slavery and superstition, and thundering a prediction in the ear of papacy, which was doomed to be literally fulfilled at the distance of nearly two hundred years. His allusions to contemporary life afford some amusing glimpses of its manners. There is room to suspect that Spenser was acquainted with his works; and Milton, either from accident or design, has the appearance of having had one of Langlande's passages in his mind, when he wrote the sublime description of the lazar-house, in "Paradise Lost."

Thomas Campbell, 1819, *An Essay on English Poetry*

The Poem of *Piers Ploughman* is peculiarly a national work. It is the most remarkable monument of the public spirit of our forefathers in the middle, or, as they are often termed, dark ages. It is a pure specimen of the English language at a period when it had sustained few of the corruptions which have disfigured it since we have had writers of "Grammars;" and in it we may study with advantage many of the difficulties of the language which these writers have misunderstood. It is, moreover, the finest example left of the kind of versification which was purely English, inasmuch as it had been the only one in use among our Anglo-Saxon progenitors, in common with the other people of the North.

Thomas Wright, 1842, ed. *The Vision and Creed of Piers Ploughman,* Introduction, p. xxvii

The poem—in all its shapes—abounds with passages which we could ill afford to lose; the vivid truthfulness of its delineations of the life and manners of our forefathers has been often praised, and it is difficult to praise it too highly. . . . The extreme earnestness of the author and the obvious truthfulness and blunt honesty of his character are in themselves attractive and lend a value to all he utters, even when he is evolving a theory or wanders into abstract questions of theological speculation. But we are the more pleased when we perceive, as we very soon do, that he is evidently of a *practical* turn of mind, and loves best to exercise his shrewd English commonsense upon topics of every day interest.

Walter W. Skeat, 1867, ed. *The Vision of William concerning Piers Plowman,* Introduction, pp. iv, v

It is one thing to reach the public, quite another to reach the people; and the more difficult achievement was Langland's. His grave verse went straight to the heart of the still Teutonic race, indifferent to the facile French lilts of Chaucer. Serfs and laborers, seemingly inaccessible to influences of culture, as they staggered along under their heavy loads, eagerly welcomed the Visions of Piers the Plowman, of Do Well, Do Better, and Do Best. They heard, pondered, and repeated, till they realized that their souls had found utterance at last. The central version of the great poem—for the author rewrote it three times—antedated by only two or three years the Peasants' Revolt under Wat Tyler and John Ball. This was the first largely significant prophecy in England of a distinct industrial movement. Its inspiration was no gentle Christian idealism, such as stirred the followers of St. Francis, but a spirit of fierce rebellion, flinging itself with awakened intelligence and destructive ardor against established law. The first note of the social revolution is heard in its confused echoes. No one can trace the thrilling story of its hope and passions, and fail to see how potent had been the poem of Langland in arousing and shaping its ideals. Phrases from the poem were used as watchwords in the uprising; more than this, the central personage, the intensely conceived Piers the Plowman, became a spiritual presence to the laboring classes of England. In those days before telegram or press, association was difficult; this poem, quietly passing from lip to lip, helped bind together the scattered and voiceless workingmen of the eastern counties with a new sense of fellowship. Langland was thus a direct power, as few poets have ever been, upon an awakening national life.

Vida D. Scudder, 1898, *Social Ideals in English Letters,* pp. 21, 24

Piers Plowman Creed (1394?)

The Crede of Piers Ploughman, if not written by the author of the *Vision,* is at least written by a scholar who fully emulates his master; and Pope was so deeply struck with this little poem, that he has very carefully analyzed the whole.

Isaac Disraeli, 1841, "Piers Ploughman," *Amenities of Literature*

This poem, consisting of 850 lines, was written in alliterative verse by a disciple of Wycliffe, whose name has not been ascertained. The title and form of it are both imitated from William Langland's more famous poem, known as *The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman.* Though these two poems, the *Crede* and the *Vision,* are, in fact, by different authors, and express different sentiments on some points, they are, to the disgrace of students of English literature, continually being confounded with each other. There is every reason to believe that the anonymous author of the *Crede* was also the author of "The Plowman's Tale," a satirical poem which has often been wrongly ascribed to Chaucer.

Walter W. Skeat, 1871, *Specimens of English Literature,* 1394-1579, p. 1

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

C. 1340-1400

Born in London(?), 1343(?). Page in household of Duke of Clarence, 1357. Took part in King's expedition into France, 1359; taken prisoner in Brittany. Was "Valettus" to the King in 1361. Pension of 20 marks granted him by King, June, 1367; Yoeman of King's Chamber at that time. Abroad again, 1369 and 1370. To Italy on Commission respecting commercial treaty, Dec. 1372 to autumn of 1373. Married, 1366(?). Grant of daily pitcher of wine (afterward commuted to second pension of 20 marks), 23 April, 1374. Comptroller of Customs, 8 June, 1374. Pension of £10 granted him by Duke of Lancaster, 13 June, 1374. Two custodianships, 1375. On secret service with Sir John Burley, 1376; with Sir Thomas Percy in Flanders, 1377; in France and Italy, 1378 and 1379. Second Comptrollership of Customs, 1382. Knight of the Shire for Kent, 1386. Deprived of Comptrollerships, 1386. *Canterbury Tales* probably written, 1387 to 1393. Financial difficulties; sold pensions, May, 1388. Appointed Clerk of King's Works, 1389; superseded, 1391. Probably Forester of North Petherton Park, Somersetshire, 1391-98. Grant of £20 a year for life from King Richard II, 1394; of 40 marks from King Henry IV, 1399. Took lease of house in Westminster, Christmas Eve, 1399. Died 25 Oct., 1400. Buried in Westminster Abbey. WORKS: *Assembly of Fowls,* first printed, 1478; *Canterbury Tales,* first printed by Caxton, 1478(?), by Pynson, 1493(?),

by Wynken de Worde, 1498; *Troilus and Cressida,* first printed (anon.), 1482(?); *The House (or Book) of Fame,* first printed by Caxton, 1486(?); Chaucer's translation of Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiæ,* first printed, 1490(?). COLLECTED WORKS: earliest, 1532, 1542, etc.; latest (Kelmscott Press), 1896.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 53

Of his collected works that of 1532 was edited by Thynne, 1561 by Stowe, 1598 by Speight, 1721 by Urry, and the most important that of Skeat 1894-97, 6 vols. The first important edition of the *Canterbury Tales* is Tyrwhitt, 1775-78. The first important biography, but unreliable, is by Godwin 1803-04.

Charles Wells Moulton, 1900

SEE: *Complete Works,* ed. Walter W. Skeat, 1894-97, 7 v.; *Poetical Works,* ed. Fred N. Robinson, 1933, Second revision, 1957; John Matthews Manly and Edith Rickert, *The Text of The Canterbury Tales,* 1940, 8 v.; *The Canterbury Tales,* tr. Nevill Coghill, 1952 [Penguin Paper Book]; *Chaucer's Poetry: An Anthology For the Modern Reader,* ed. E. Talbot Donaldson, 1958, repr. 1964; *The Book of Troilus and Criseyde by Geoffrey Chaucer,* ed. R. K. Root, 1926, repr. 1930; *Troilus and Cressida: Rendered Into Modern English Verse,* ed. George P. Krapp, 1932; R. K. Root, *The Poetry of Chaucer,* 1906, rev. 1922, repr. 1957; John S. P. Tatlock, *The Development and Chronology of Chaucer's Work,* 1907; G. L. Kittredge, *Chaucer and His Poetry,* 1915; Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, *Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion, 1357-1900,* 1925, 3 v.; Robert D. French, *A Chaucer Handbook,* 1927, rev. 1947; John Livingston Lowes, *Geoffrey Chaucer and The Development of His Genius,* 1934; Henry S. Bennett, *Chaucer and the Fifteenth Century,* 1947; Edith Rickert, *Chaucer's World,* ed. Clair C. Olson and M. M. Crow, 1948; John S. P. Tatlock, *The Mind and Art of Chaucer,* 1950; William W. Lawrence, *The Canterbury Tales,* 1950; Kemp Malone, *Chapters on Chaucer,* 1951; Raymond Preston, *Chaucer,* 1952; also see Robert A. Pratt, "The Order of *The Canterbury Tales*" in *Publications of the Modern Language Association,* LXVI (1951), pp. 1141-67.

CHRONOLOGY OF CHAUCER'S WRITINGS:

Before 1372: *The ABC*; *The Book of the Duchess* (1369-70); lyrics and complaints of French influence.

1372-80: Works showing influence of French tradition but especially reflecting the beginning of Italian influence: *The House of Fame; Saint Cecilia* ("The Second Nun's Tale"); stories used later for "The Monk's Tale"; *Anelida.*

1380-86: The Italian period: *Parliament of Fowls; Palamon; Troilus and Cressida; Boece; Legend of Good Women;* ballades reflecting interest in Boethius.

1387-92: "General Prologue" and earlier Canterbury Tales; *A Treatise on the Astrolabe* (1391-92).

1393-1400: Later Canterbury Tales (including the "Marriage Group"); short poems including "Bukton" and "Complaint to His Purse."

Chaucer's authorship of the translation from the French of *Romaunt of the Rose* by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun is doubtful. Early fragment (A) of translation is placed in Chaucer's French period (before 1372).

PERSONAL

Til that our hoste Iapen tho bigan,
And than at erst he loked up-on me,
And seyde thus, "what man artow?" quod he;
"Thou lokest as thou woldest finde an hare,
For ever up-on the ground I see thee stare.
Approche neer, and loke up merily.
Now war yow, sirs, and lat this man have place;
He in the waast is shape as wel as I;
This were a popet in an arm tenbrace
For any womman, smal and fair of face.
He semeth elvish by his contenaunce,
For un-to no wight dooth he daliaunce.
. . . . . now shul we here
Som deyntee thing, me thinketh by his chere"

Geoffrey Chaucer, 1387-93(?), *Prologue to Sir Thopas*

And grete well Chaucer, when ye mete,
As my disciple and my poete.
For in the floures of his youth,
In sondry wise, as he well couth,
Of dittees and of songes glade,
The which he for my sake made,
The lond fulfilled is over all,
Whereof to him in speciall
Above all other I am most holde.
Forthy now in his daies olde
Thou shalt him telle this message,
That he upon his later age
To sette an end of all his werke,
As he, which is no min owne clerke,
Do make his testament of love,
As thou hast do thy shrifte above,
So that my court it may recorde.

John Gower, c. 1383, *Confessio Amantis, Liber Octavus*, MS. Harl., 3490

His stature was not very tall;
Lean he was; his legs were small,
Hos'd within a stock of red;
A button'd bonnet on his head,
From under which did hang, I ween,
Silver hairs both bright and sheen;
His beard was white, trimmèd round;
His countenance blithe and merry found;
As sleveless jacket, large and wide,
With many plaits and skirts side,
Of water-camlet did he wear;
A whittle by his belt he bear;
His shoes were cornèd, broad before;
His ink-horn at his side he wore,
And in his hand he bore a book:—
Thus did this ancient poet look.

Robert Greene, 1592(?), *Greene's Vision, Greene's Works,* ed. Dyce, p. 320

As to his temper he had a mixture of the gay, the modest and the grave. His reading was deep and extensive, his judgment sound and discerning; he was communicative of his knowledge, and ready to correct or pass over the faults of his contemporary writers. He knew how to judge of and excuse the slips of weaker capacities, and pitied rather than exposed the ignorance of that age. In one word, he was a great scholar, a pleasant wit, a candid critic, a sociable companion, a stedfast friend, a great philosopher, a temperate economist, and a pious Christian.

John Urry, (?) 1721, ed. *Life and Works of Chaucer*

It is in one of the Royal MSS. of this poem* in the British Museum that Occleve has left a drawing of Chaucer: according to which, Chaucer's portraiture was made on his monument, in the chapel of Saint Blase in Westminster-abbey, by the benefaction of Nicholas Brigham, in the year 1556. And from this drawing, in 1598, John Speed procured the print of Chaucer prefixed to Speght's edition of his works; which has been since copied in a most finished engraving by Vertue. Yet it must be remembered, that the same drawing occurs in an Harleian MSS. written about Occleve's age, and in another of the Cottonian department. Occleve himself mentions this drawing in his *Consolatio Servilis*. It exactly resembles the curious picture on board of our venerable bard, preserved in the Bodleian gallery at Oxford. I have a very old picture of Chaucer on board, much like Occleve's, formerly kept in Chaucer's house, a quadrangular stone-mansion, at Wood-

**De Regimie Principum.*

stock in Oxfordshire; which commanded a prospect of the ancient magnificent royal palace, and of many beautiful scenes in the adjacent park: and whose last remains, chiefly consisting of what was called Chaucer's bedchamber, with an old carved oaken roof, evidently original, were demolished about fifteen years ago.

Thomas Warton, 1778-81, *The History of English Poetry,* sec. xx

For the well-known portrait of Chaucer we are indebted to an old MS. of the *Canterbury Tales,* belonging to the fifteenth century, which is at present in the possession of the Marquis of Stafford. This MS., at the commencement of the tale of Melibœus, represents the poet riding on horseback, in a vest or gipoun of dark velvet, with a bonnet of the same colour, with gilt anelace, or dagger, black boots, and with the trappings of his horse partially gilt. In the part of the tale of Molibœus in which the poet pourtrays himself, he hints that he was rather corpulent, and was in the habit of looking down on the ground. He also gives a similar portrait of himself in the Prologue to the *Rime of Sire Thopas.* But, not withstanding this tendency to be corpulent, his appearance conveys the impression of great delicacy. He seems to have been short of stature. His countenance, calm and composed as it was, appears to have been expressive of a high degree of naïve humour. The character and temperament of Chaucer are clearly and beautifully set forth in his own works. He was cheerful, kind, open and serene to the last moments of his life, and gained the affections of all with whom he came in contact; his social habits were formed by the various circumstances and spheres in which he had lived and moved. He was naturally social, and even convivial, and, like many other poets, he paid little regard to his financial means; hence we find him involved in difficulties at times, when, considering his ample income, we should have least expected it. But, notwithstanding this carelessness about his own affairs, Chaucer was, in the highest degree, strict and punctual in the performance of all his official duties.

Leonhard Schmitz, 1841, "A Life of Chaucer,"
The Poems of Geoffrey Chaucer, p. cxxxvi

If character may be devined from works, he was a good man, genial, sincere, hearty, temperate of mind, more wise, perhaps, for this world than the next, but thoroughly humane, and friendly with God and men. I know not how to sum up what we feel about him better than by saying (what would have pleased most one who was indifferent to fame) that we love him more even than we admire.

James Russell Lowell, 1870-90, *Chaucer, Prose Works,*
Riverside ed., vol. III, p. 365

An old man in a lodge within a park;
The chamber walls depicted all around
With portraitures of huntsman, hawk, and hound,
And the hurt deer. He listeneth to the lark,
Whose song comes with the sunshine through the dark
Of painted glass in leaden lattice bound;
He listenth and he laugheth at the sound,
Then writeth in a book like any clerk

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1873, *A Book of Sonnets, Poems,* Cambridge ed., p. 315

With this guide every reader can work out the succession of the Tales for himself, and mix them in proper order with the Minor Poems. . . . He will then see Chaucer, not only outwardly as he was in the flesh—page, soldier, squire, diplomatist, Custom-house officer, Member of Parliament, then a suppliant for protection and favour, a beggar for money; but inwardly as he was in the spirit—clear of all nonsense of Courts of Love, &c.—gentle and loving, early timid and in despair, sharing others' sorrow, and, by comforting them, losing part of his own; yet long dwelling on the sadness of forsaken love, seeking the "consolation of philosophy," watching the stars, praying to the "Mother of God"; studying books, and, more still, woman's nature; his eyes open to all the beauties of the world around him, his ear to the "heavenly harmony" of birds' song; at length becoming the most gracious and tender spirit, the sweetest singer, the best pourtrayer, the most pathetic, and withal the most genial and humourful healthy-souled man that England had ever seen. Still, after 500 years, he is bright and fresh as the glad light green of the May he so much loved; he is still second only to Shakespeare in England, and fourth only to him and Dante and Homer in the world. When will our Victorian time love and honour him as it should? Surely, of all of our poets he is the one to come *home* to us most.

Frederick James Furnivall, 1873, "Recent Work at Chaucer," *Macmillan's Magazine,* vol. 27, p. 389

Chaucer was thus, at various times of his life, a courtier, soldier, diplomatist, and a man of business, and it was mainly by hard work done in these various capacities that he earned his living, though in his old age the fact that he was a great poet may have won for him rather more consideration than kings always show to their worn-out servants. Probably no other poet of equal rank has ever led so active and varied a life, and it is because we find Chaucer in his poems so shrewd a man of the world, so astonishingly observant, and so good a judge of character, that we take an interest in finding out how he obtained his experience. When we come to examine his

writings we shall find that the double life he was obliged to lead had one bad effect: it caused him to leave many of his poems unfinished. If we may take a passage in his *Hous of Fame* (Bk. ii, ll. 139-152) quite literally, he must often have been in danger of over-work, though the absolutely healthy tone of his poems forbids us to think that he ever fell a victim to it.

Alfred W. Pollard, 1893, *Chaucer (Literature Primers)*, p. 21

Romaunt of the Rose (1360-65?)

Thou art in Albion the god of worldly love; and into good English thou didst translate the book of the Rose.

Eustache Deschamps, c. 1370, *Ballade Addressed to Geoffrey Chaucer*

This poem is esteemed by the French the most valuable piece of their old poetry. It is far beyond the rude efforts of all their preceding romancers; and they have nothing equal to it before the reign of Francis I., who died in the year 1547.

Thomas Warton, 1778-81, *History of English Poetry*, sec. xiii

His translation of the decidedly uninteresting allegory known as the *Romaunt of the Rose,* is no doubt the production of his earlier years, as we infer from the language and from the mode of versification, which he copied from the original, and which was also adopted by Gower in his English poems. The translation, however, attracted some notice even on the Continent, for the somewhat common-place French poet, Eustace Deschamps, flattered by seeing his soft-sounding French translated into rough Saxon, felt himself called upon to laud "the great translator, the noble Geoffrey Chaucer," in a composition of many strophes. Happily the poet did not long continue to occupy himself with such subordinate labours.

Reinhold Pauli, 1861, *Pictures of Old England*, p. 227

Chaucer knew his countrymen well, and did not care to give them more than 3629 out of the 17,930 verses of Jean de Meung. He omits the democracy as well as the seductive indecency of his original; and in both cases he doubtless followed the lead of his personal taste, as well as of his literary judgment. He had been brought up at court, and was by training in harmony with the loyal aristocratic feeling of his day; and he was, moreover, in all probability, a Lollard, or at least a sympathiser with the Lollards, having married the sister of John of Gaunt's second wife, and being, we may presume, no little influenced by the opinions of that staunch patron of the religious purists. But indeed his genius was cast in a different mould from

that of Jean de Meung, who was natural philosopher first, and romancist afterwards. Chaucer, like Guillaume de Lorris, was before all a romancist; and it is therefore perfectly natural that he should have reproduced the latter's verses with the greatest zest and completeness.

Henri Van Laun, 1876, *History of French Literature,* vol. I, p. 184

It has already been said that Chaucer translated the *Romaunt,* and that a version has been current under his name for centuries. There is only one MS. of his translation, in the Hunterian Museum at Glasgow, so that we have no means of comparing texts, and thus settling the difficult questions that have been raised about it. As it stands, the poem contains various features which, in the opinion of the most advanced school of Chaucerian criticism, mark it out as being not Chaucer's; the principal difficulty being connected with the rhymes, some of which seem to be irreconcilable with Chaucer's principles of pronounciation. The question cannot be properly discussed here, but in deference to what seems to be the balance of opinion we quote the *Romaunt* under the head of "Poems attributed to Chaucer."

Thomas Humphry Ward, 1880, *The English Poets,* vol. I, p. 82

In spite of occasional variation in the character of the version, the work, as a whole, bears its own overwhelming testimony as to its having come but from one hand. To arrive at any other conclusion, one must fix his eyes so closely upon certain points of detail that he loses sight both of other details and of the general view. The arguments that have been adduced for a dual authorship are so far from convincing that they cannot even be called specious.

Thomas R. Lounsbury, 1891, *Studies in Chaucer,* vol. II, p. 12

The result of the discussion seems clear. The affirmative evidence brought forward by Mr. Lounsbury, when reduced to its lowest terms, we have found to be entirely consistent with the belief that the translation is not by Chaucer, but by an imitator. The negative evidence, on the other hand, from dialect, grammar, and metre, if it does not show conclusively that Chaucer and the translator were two persons, still creates the strongest kind of probability in favor of that supposition. We must therefore be allowed to prefer the theory that is in accordance with all the facts to the theory that is strongly opposed to the most significant of them, and to believe that the *Romaunt* is not Chaucer's with the possible exception of the first seventeen hundred lines.

George Lymann Kittredge, 1892, "Authorship of the *Romaunt of the Rose,*" *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature,* vol. I, p. 65

Chaucer's translation of the *Romaunt of the Rose* is not remarkable only as making a landmark in the refinement of our versification. It marks with equal significance the rise of a new spirit in English poetry, the importation of thoughts and themes from the Continent, announcing the approach of the Renaissance.

W. J. Courthope, 1895, *A History of English Poetry*, vol. I, p. 258

Book of the Dutchess (1369-70?)

A multitude of ideas and images, which were very common in French literature since the *Romance of the Rose*, appear here for the first time in an English dress—such as reminiscences from classical antiquity or even from the Old Testament, long spun-out allegories, witty and uncouth touches from the wisdom of the mediæval schoolmen. However much the mind may be distracted by all this learning, parenthetically introduced, we nevertheless frequently hear the voice of real passion from the strange figure, and in some passages of the knight's discourse—as in his invectives against Fortune, or in his complaints, given in antithetic form—the student of Shakspere is reminded of the great bard's earlier works, especially Romeo and Juliet.

Bernhard Ten Brink, 1892, *History of English Literature, (Wyclif, Chaucer, Earliest Drama, Renaissance)*, tr. Robinson, p. 42

The poem has many of the faults of an early effort. Its many learned references, its long-spun allegories, its philosophical platitudes, all tend to destroy the effect aimed at. But a real power of characterisation, and the germs at least of the poet's later dramatic power, are evident. Though the speeches are too long and too full of digressions, the dialogue between the poet and the unknown knight is well conceived, but the retarded crisis intended to come as a surprise fails of its effect, because too long postponed.

H. Frank Heath, 1894, *Social England*, vol. II, p. 209

A distinguished English scholar has been moved to undertake Chaucer's defence against the strictures passed on this poem by a French critic; he finds it graceful and pathetic. I confess that it seems to me few readers, who judge the composition apart from Chaucer's prestige, are likely to share his opinion. The design . . . is singularly barren of genuine invention. Simple as it is, the action is clumsily conducted, for the knight acquaints the reader from the first with his lady's death, thus spoiling what might have been a dramatic climax, if the fact had been withheld till after the recital of all her amiable qualities. Nor is the crudeness of the general conception relieved by any remarkable beauties of detail. The story serves to piece together a certain

number of "purple patches," taken from various poems which the author has read and admired; but these do not seem to be in any way necessarily connected with the central thought. It would, in fact, be as exacting to look for pathos in a poem of this order, as in Spenser's *Astrophel,* or in the pastoral elegies described in the 30th number of the *Guardian.* The mourning is of that conventional kind which is prescribed for a conventional class of poetry, and, owing to a certain lack of skill, the composition fails to attain a high place even in that lowly sphere.

W. J. Courthope, 1895, *A History of English Poetry,* vol. I, p. 267

Translation of Boethius (1380-83?)

Chaucer did not English Boethius second-hand, through any early French version, as some have supposed, but made his translation with the Latin original before him.

Richard Morris, ed., 1868, *Chaucer's Translation of Boethius's "De Consolatione Philosophiæ,"* Introduction, p. xiii

When we come to consider the style and manner in which Chaucer has executed his self-imposed task, we must first of all make some allowance for the difference between the scholarship of his age and of our own. One great difference is obvious, though constantly lost sight of, viz. that the teaching in those days was almost entirely oral, and that the student had to depend upon his memory to an extent which would now be regarded by many as extremely inconvenient. Suppose that, in reading Boethius, Chaucer comes across the phrase *"ueluti quidam clauus atque gubernaculum"* (Bk. iii. pr. 12, note to l. 55), and does not remember the sense of *clauus;* what is to be done? It is quite certain, though this again is frequently lost sight of, that he had no access to a convenient and well-arranged Latin Dictionary, but only to such imperfect glossaries as were then in use. Almost the only resource, unless he had at hand a friend more learned than himself, was to guess. He guesses accordingly; and, taking *clauus* to mean much the same thing as *clauis,* puts down in his translation: "and he is as a *keye* and a stere." Some mistakes of this character were almost inevitable; and it must not greatly surprise us to be told, that the "inaccuracy and infelicity" of Chaucer's translation "is not that of an inexperienced Latin scholar, but rather of one who was no Latin scholar at all," as Mr. Stewart says in his Essay, p. 226. It is useful to bear this in mind, because a similar lack of accuracy is characteristic of Chaucer's other works also; and we must not always infer that emendation is necessary, when we find in this text some curious error.

Walter W. Skeat, 1894, ed. *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer,* Introduction to *Boethius,* vol. ii, p. xxi

Chaucer could not translate a work like Boethius' *Consolation* without being profoundly influenced by the thought, if indeed interest in the thought did not occasion the translation. The interest and influence are visible in two ways. First, in modifying Chaucer's conceptions of love—in substituting for the chivalrous notion expounded in his earlier works the more philosophic idea of love as a chain binding earth and sea, as a universal, all-pervading bond of union. Secondly, in inducing a sort of scepticism. How is is possible to reconcile the freedom of the human will with the fact of Divine providence? The problem is insoluble, and so Chaucer found it.

F. J. Snell, 1899, *Periods of European Literature, The Fourteenth Century*, p. 298

Parliament of Foules (1382?)

The general conception had . . . about it nothing novel; but, as regards the main incident from which Chaucer's poem takes its name, no particular resemblance has ever yet been discovered between it and any other production which has been described. In this respect it was probably a pure creation of his own, and perhaps alluded, in a covert way, to some event of which we now know nothing. At the same time, *The Parlament of Foules* is, to a certain extent, penetrated with the atmosphere of the books with which the poet was familiar. Not only are direct references made to them, but numerous passages show the traces of remote suggestion, if not of actual imitation. But it was never an atmosphere of the kind that hid from the poet his insight into life, or dulled in the slightest his sympathy with nature. Chaucer read much in old books, as he often tells us; but he thoroughly assimilated what he read, and it became all his own. What he borrowed he gave again to the world in a new, and often in a more striking form.

Thomas R. Lounsbury, 1877 ed., *The Parlament of Foules*, Introduction, p. 8

There are no signs of an unripe intellect about the poem. It is full of the freshness and life which always remained such distinguishing characteristics of Chaucer. . . . This charming little poem may almost be taken as a type of the excellencies of Chaucer. It shows us his love of nature, his vivacity, his humour. Like all that he has written, it reflects faithfully the spirit of his age, and breathes the very atmosphere of chivalry.

Louise Creighton, 1877, *Life of Edward the Black Prince*, pp. 134, 135

His early poetry scans far better than it reads. Proof abounds upon every page that he is bent rather upon making out his scheme of feet than deliver-

ing himself of his thought in a normal way. In the *Parlament of Foules* it is not easy to determine at sight where the emphasis belongs. There is dull, monotonic dispersion of stress, which comes from the meter and not the sense, and there are forced accents,—not less than three in the first stanza, and two of these upon rhyme words.

L. A. Sherman, 1893, *Analytics of Literature,* p. 45

Troilus and Cresside (1380-83?)

1527044

Go, litel book, go litel myn tregedie . . .
And kis the steppes, whereas thous seest pace
Vergile, Ovyde, Omer, Lucan and Stace.
And for ther is so greet diversitee
In English and in wryting of our tonge,
So preye I god that noon miswryte thee,
Ne thee mismetre for defaute of tonge.

Geoffrey Chaucer, 1380(?), *Troilus and Criseyde,* bk. v, ss. 256-7

(Qd. Loue). I shall tell thee this lesson to learne: myne owne true seruaunt, the noble Phylosophicall Poete in English, whych euermore him busieth and trauaileth right sore my name to encrease, wherfore all that willen me good, owe to doe hym worship and reuerence both; truely his better ne his pere, in schoole of my rules cud I neuer find: He (qd. she) in a treatise that he made of my seruant Troylus, hath this matter touched, and at the full this question assoiled. Certainly his noble sayings can I not amend: in goodnesse of gentle manliche speech, wythout any manner of nicetie of stafieres imagination, in wit and in good reason of sentence, he passeth all other makers.

Anonymous, 1387(?), *Testament of Love, Chaucer's Works,* ed. Speght, 1602, p. 301

Chaucer, undoubtedly did excellently in hys *Troylus and Cresseid;* of whom, truly I know not, whether to mervaile more, either that he in that mistie time, could see so clearely, or that wee in this cleare age, walke so stumblingly after him.

Sir Philip Sidney, 1595, *An Apologie for Poetrie*

Chaucer, of all admired, the story gives;
There constant to eternity it lives.
. . . . . .
For, to say truth, it were an endless thing,
And too ambitious, to aspire to him,

Weak as we are, and almost breathless swim
In this deep water. Do but you hold out
Your helping hands, and we shall tack about
And something do to save us; you shall hear
Scenes, though below his art, may yet appear
Worth two hours' travail. To his bones sweet sleep!
Content to you!

John Fletcher and William Shakespeare(?), 1616(?), *The Two Noble Kinsmen,* Prologue

I'm glad, the stomach of the time's so good,
That it can relish, can digest strong food;
That learning's not absurd; and men dare know
How poets spake three hundred years ago.
Like travellers, we had been out so long,
Our native was become an unknown tongue,
And homebred Chaucer unto us was such,
As if he had been written in High Dutch:
Till thou the height didst level, and didst pierce
The depth of his inimitable verse.
Let others praise thy how, I admire thy what:
'Twas noble, the adventure to translate
A book not tractable to ev'ry hand,
And such as few presum'd to understand.
Those upstart verse-wrights, that first steal his wit,
And then pronounce him dull; or those that sit
In judgment of the language they ne'er view'd,
And, because they are lazy, Chaucer's rude;
Blush they at these fair dealings, which have shewn
Thy worth, and yet reserv'd to him his own?

William Barker, 1635, *Commendatory Verses Prefixed to Sir Francis Kynaston's Translation of Chaucer's Troilus and Cresseide*

Despite occasional prolixity and a few artistic flaws *Troilus and Cressida* is perhaps the most beautiful poem of its kind in the English language.

Alfred W. Pollard, 1893, *Chaucer (Literature Primers),* p. 85

Chaucer wrote one romance which more than *The Canterbury Tales* contains the spirit of our modern novel. This is the *Troylus and Criseyde.* . . . No work in character drawing superior to some of that in this poem was ever done by Chaucer. . . . This slowness in the development of English

prose narrative is not altogether to be wondered at. Force of example is strong; and this is what made the *Troylus and Criseyde* a metrical romance —the last, as it was the best—rather than, as it might naturally have been, the first of English romances in prose. This was an accident in form. What is more remarkable is the fact that Chaucer had no immediate successor in the field of realistic art, in prose or poetry; that he marked not only the climax, but the culmination of this new movement in English literature.

William Edward Simonds, 1894, *An Introduction to the Study of English Fiction*, pp. 22, 23

In *Troilus and Criseyde* we find another Chaucer, far more complete and powerful; he surpasses now even the Italians whom he had taken for his models, and writes the first great poem of renewed English literature. . . . In *Troilus and Criseyde* the Celt's ready wit, gift of repartee, and sense of the dramatic; the care for the form and ordering of a narrative, dear to the Latin races; the Norman's faculty of observation, are allied to the emotion and tenderness of the Saxon. This fusion had been brought about slowly, when however the time came, its realisation was complete all at once, almost sudden. Yesterday authors of English tongue could only lisp; to-day, no longer content to talk, they sing.

J. J. Jusserand, 1895, *A Literary History of the English People*, pp. 299, 300

The dramatist's conception of Cressida's character necessarily limits the function of her uncle, and the Pandarus of Shakspere is of far less importance in the development of the plot than his namesake in Chaucer's poem. It is difficult to see why some critics should speak of the later Pandarus as a more finished type than the earlier. We find in him not a trace of the fascination, the highbred polish, the stores of humour and worldly wisdom which distinguish Chaucer's masterly portrait. We see instead a cringing hanger-on of the court and of great houses, whose conversational stock-in-trade consists of honeyed, scented phrases, and gossip of the boudoir. Chaucer's Pandarus has a real affection for his friend, and takes care that his affairs of the heart shall be kept a secret from the world. But in the play he is simply a busybody, who revels in holding the threads of a fashionable intrigue, and who is at trouble, by sly looks and hints, to make it plain to outsiders that he knows more than he cares to speak of.

Frederick S. Boas, 1896, *Shakspere and his Predecessors*, p. 376

The poem in which medieval romance passes out of itself into the form of the modern novel. What Cervantes and what Fielding did was done first

by Chaucer; and this was the invention of a kind of story in which life might be represented no longer in a conventional or abstract manner, or with sentiment and pathos instead of drama, but with characters adapting themselves to different circumstances, no longer obviously breathed upon by the master of the show to convey his own ideas, but moving freely and talking like men and women. The romance of the Middle Ages comes to an end, in one of the branches of the family tree, by the production of a romance that has all the freedom of epic, that comprehends all good and evil, and excludes nothing as common or unclean which can be made in any way to strengthen the impression of life and variety.

W. P. Ker, 1897, *Epic and Romance,* p. 420

The House of Fame (1375?)

This poem contains great strokes of Gothic imagination, yet bordering often on the most ideal and capricious extravagance. . . . Pope has imitated this piece, with his usual elegance of diction and harmony of versification. But in the mean time, he has not only misrepresented the story, but marred the character of the poem. He has endeavored to correct its extravagancies, by new refinements and additions of another cast: but he did not consider, that extravagancies are essential to a poem of such a structure, and even constitute its beauties. An attempt to unite order and exactness of imagery with a subject formed on principles so professedly romantic and anomalous, is like giving Corinthian pillars to a Gothic palace. When I read Pope's elegant imitation of this piece, I think I am walking among the modern monuments unsuitably placed in Westminster-abbey.

Thomas Warton, 1778-81, *The History of English Poetry,* sec. xiv

The *House of Fame,* in homeliness of style, and lameness of versification, falls below almost all the poems of Chaucer, while, in grandeur of scenes and images, it rises above them. In this latter respect, as in the unearthliness of the whole subject, it may be compared to the *Commedia* of Dante: and the bold and rough sketches which it contains are sometimes not much unlike those of the Italian poet. The *House of Fame* itself, placed on an almost inaccessible rock of ice, is an image of this nature, at once extravagant and sublime.

J. H. Hippisley, 1837, *Chapters on Early English Literature,* p. 131

In none of his other poems has Chaucer displayed such an extent of knowledge, or drawn his images from such a variety of sources. The Arabic system of numeration, then lately introduced into Europe, the explosion

of gunpowder, and the theory of sound, may be mentioned as examples of the topics of illustration and disquisition in which he abounds. His intimate acquaintance with classical authors is exhibited in the felicitous judgments he pronounces on their writings.

Robert Bell (John M. Jephson), 1854-56, *Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer,* vol. VI, p. 193

The Palace of Honour, for example, is far more densely crowded with historical imagery than *The House of Fame,* but in vividness of representation it is not even distantly to be compared to Chaucer's poem. With quick, subtle strokes, Chaucer brings a scene or a character so distinctly before our imagination that it hardly ever fades from it, while Douglas's personages are almost all shadowy phantasms, *voces et praeterea nihil.*

John Merry Ross, 1884, *Scottish History and Literature, etc.,* ed. Brown, p. 334

It is needless to say that this Poem is genuine, as Chaucer himself claims it twice over; once in his Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women,* I. 417, and again by the insertion in the poem itself of the name *Geffrey.* . . . The authorities for the text are few and poor; hence it is hardly possible to produce a thoroughly satisfactory text. There are three MSS. of the fifteenth century, viz. F. (Fairfax MS. 16, in the Bodleian Library); B. (MS. Bodley, 638, in the same); P. (MS. Pepys 2006, in Magdalene College, Cambridge). The last of these is imperfect, ending at l. 1843. There are two early printed editions of some value, viz. Cx. (Caxton's edition, undated); and Th. (Thynne's edition, 1532). None of the later editions are of much value, except the critical edition by Hans Willert (Berlin, 1883).

Walter W. Skeat, 1894 ed., *Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer,* vol. III, pp. vii, xiii

The *House of Fame* is introspective. In it Chaucer reviews his life and his aims, and the work affords evidence of some discontent. Apart from books and dreams, the world is a dismal waste. From what is said later it is plain that, under this similitude, he alludes to the dry ciphering which occupied him in his official post. At the date of the composition of the poem he had just come back from a pilgrimage, from mingling with his kind; and, fresh from the delights of society, he seems to have asked himself, with reference to his wearisome toil and fine-spun ideal world, "What profit?" Chaucer, moreover, had not been happy in love, and it is for that reason that the walls of the Temple of Venus are glum wtih the story of Æneas, and more particularly with Dido's martyrdom. The poet needed distraction.

F. J. Snell, 1899, *Periods of European Literature, The Fourteenth Century,* p. 303

Legende of Good Women (1384-85)

This poete wrote, at the requeste of the quene,
A Legende of perfite holynesse,
Of good Women to fynd out nynetene
That did excell in bounte and fayrenes,
But for his labour and besinesse
Was importable his wittes to encombre
In all this world to fynd so grete a nombre.

John Lydgate, c. 1430-31, *Fall of Princes,* Prologue

I read, before my eyelids dropt their shade,
"The Legend of Good Women," long ago
Sung by the morning star of song, who made
His music heard below;
Dan Chaucer, the first warbler, whose sweet breath
Preluded those melodious bursts that fill
The spacious times of great Elizabeth
With sounds that echo still.

Lord Tennyson, 1830, *A Dream of Fair Women*

In the *Legende* it is the Prologue, in its two drafts, which gives him his opportunity. Of the nine stories of loving women which he had patience to complete, only the first three (those of Cleopatra, Thisbe, and Dido) are in any way worthy of him.

Alfred W. Pollard, 1898, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer,* Globe ed., Introduction, p. xxiv

The chief significance of the poem lies in this—that, whilst its contents may be deemed in a certain sense reactionary, its outward form marks another stage in the direction of the *Canterbury Tales*. The *Legende of Goode Women* is, in fact, the first example in English of a connected series of short versified tales in decasyllabic couplet.

F. J. Snell, 1899, *Periods of European Literature, The Fourteenth Century,* p. 309

A Treatise on the Astrolabe (1391)

When I happened to look upon the conclusions of the *Astrolabie* compiled by Geffray Chaucer and founde the same corrupte and false in so many and sondrie places that I doubted whether the rudeness of the worke were not a greater sclander to the authour than trouble and offense

to the readers, I dyd not a lytell mervell if a book should come out of his handes so imperfect and indigest whose other workes weare not onely rekoned for the best that ever weare set forthe in oure english tonge, but also weare taken for a manifest argument of his singular witte and generalitie in all kindes of knowledge. However be it when I called to remembrance that in his prohem he promised to sette forthe this worke in five partes, whereof weare never extante but those two first partes onely, it made me to believe that either the work was never fynisshed of the authour, or els to have ben corrupted sens by some other meanes, or what other thynge might be the cause thereof, I wiste not.

Walter Stevins, 1555(?), MS. *Conclusions of the Astrolabe,* quoted by Brae, p. 9

In some respects, the most interesting of Chaucer's works—inasmuch as it brings us into familiar and almost domestic communion with his individual self, while he describes to his "lytel sonne," with delightful simplicity and in the most inartificial language, the sort of scientific knowledge which in those early days, even more than at present, was considered necessary to a gentleman's education. . . . When the period at which Chaucer wrote is taken into consideration, and that after all he was but an *amateur* astronomer, his general correctness is something admirable.

Andrew Edmund Brae, 1869, ed. *The Treatise on the Astrolabe of Geoffrey Chaucer,* Introduction, pp. 1, 12

The existing MSS. of the *Astrolabe* are still numerous. I have been successful in finding no less than twenty-two. . . . It is remarkable that, although many printed editions of the treatise have appeared, no first-class MS. has ever hitherto come under the notice of any one of the various editors.

Walter W. Skeat, 1894, ed. *Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer,* vol. III, p. lvii

Ripeness of scholardship, certainty of style, clearness of judgment; all these come out clearly in this later work. . . . There is little of that uncertainty which characterises the *Boece,* and no infelicities of idiom or mistakes in construing the Latin.

Mark H. Liddell, 1898, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer,* Globe ed., Introduction, p. liii

The Canterbury Tales (1387?-1393?)

O ye so noble and worthy Princes and Princesses, or estates or degrees, whatever ye be, that have disposition or pleasure to read or hear the stories

of old times passed, to keep you from idleness and sloth, in eschewing other follies that might be cause of more harm following, vouchsafe, I beseech you, to find your occupation in the reading here of the Tales of Canterbury, which he compiled in this book following, first founded, imagined, and made, both for disport and learning of all those that be gentle of birth or of conditions, by the laureal and most famous poet that ever was before him in the embellishing of our rude mother's English tongue, called Chaucer a Gaufrede, of whose soul, God, for his mercy, have pity of his grace. Amen.

John Shirley, 1458(?), MS., Quoted by F. J. Furnivall, 1873, "Recent Work at Chaucer," *Macmillan's Magazine,* vol. 27, p. 385

Whiche book I have dylygently oversen, and duly examyned to the ende that it be made accordyng unto his owne makyng; for I fynde many of the sayd bookes, whiche wryters have abrydgyd it, and many thynges left out, and in some places have sette certayn versys that he never made ne sette in hys booke; of whyche bookes so incorrecte was one broughte to me vi. yere passyd, whiche I supposed had ben veray true and correcte, and accordyng to the same I dyde do emprynte a certayne nomber of them, whyche anon were solde to many and dyverse gentyl men, of whom one gentylman cam to me, and sayd that this book was not according in many places unto the book that Gefferey Chaucer had made. To whom I answered, that I had made it accordyng to my copye, and by me was nothyng added ne mynushyd. Thenne he sayd, he knewe a book whyche hys fader had and meche lovyd, that was very trewe, and accordyng unto his owen first book by hym made; and sayd more, yf I wold emprynte it agayn, he wold get me the same book for a copye. How be it he wyst well that hys fader wold not gladly departe fro it. To whom I said, in caas that he coude gete me suche a book, trewe and correcte, yet a wold ones endevoyre me to emprynte it agayn, for to satisfy the auctour, where as tofore by ygnoraunce I erryd in the hurtyng and dyffamyng his book in dyverce places, in setting in somme thynges that he never sayd he made, and leving out many thynges that he made, whyche ben requysite to be settle in it. And thus we fyll at accord, and he full gentylly gate of hys fader the said book, and delyvered it to me, by whiche I have corrected my book, as heere after alle alonge by the ayde of almighty God shal folowe, whom I humbly beseche, &c.

William Caxton, 1481, *The Canterbury Tales,* Caxton's 2nd ed., Preface

The Canterbury tales were *Chaucers* owne invention as I suppose, and where he sheweth more the naturall of his pleasant wit, then in any other

of his workes, his similitudes comparisons and all other descriptions are such as can not be amended. His meetre Heroicall of *Troilus* and *Cresseid* is very grave and stately, keeping the staffe of seven, and the verse of ten, his other verses of the Canterbury tales be but riding ryme, neverthelesse very well becomming the matter of that pleasaunt pilgrimmage in which every mans part is playd with much decency.

George Puttenham, 1589, *The Arte of English Poesie,* ed. Arber, p. 75

He must have been a man of a most wonderful comprehensive nature, because, as it has been truly observed of him, he has taken into the compass of his *Canterbury Tales* the various manners and humours (as we now call them) of the whole English nation, in his age. Not a single character has escaped him. All his pilgrims are severally distinguished from each other; and not only in their inclinations, but in their very physiognomies and persons. Baptista Porta could not have described their natures better, than by the marks which the poet gives them. The matter and manner of their tales, and of their telling, are so suited to their different educations, humours, and callings, that each of them would be improper in any other mouth. Even the grave and serious characters are distinguished by their several sorts of gravity: their discourses are such as belong to their age, their calling, and their breeding; such as are becoming of them, and of them only.

John Dryden, 1700, *Preface to the Fables; Works,* ed. Scott and Saintsbury, vol. XI, p. 229

The general plan of *The Canterbury Tales* may be learned in a great measure from the Prologue, which Chaucer himself has prefixed to them. He supposes there, that a company of Pilgrims going to Canterbury assemble at an Inn in Southwark, and agree, that, for their common amusement on the road, each of them shall tell at least one Tale in going to Canterbury, and another in coming back from thence; and that he, who shall tell the best Tales, shall be treated by the rest with a supper upon their return to the same Inn. This is shortly the *Fable*. The *Characters* of the Pilgrims are as various as, at that time, coud be found in the several departments of *middle life;* that is, in fact, as various as coud, with any probability, be brought together, so as to form one company; the highest and the lowest ranks of society being necessarily excluded. It appears, further, that the design of Chaucer was not barely to recite the Tales told by the Pilgrims, but also to describe their journey, *And all the remenant of* their *pilgrimage* (ver. 726); including, probably, their adventures at

Canterbury as well as upon the road. If we add, that the Tales, besides being nicely adapted to the Characters of their respective Relaters, were intended to be connected together by suitable introductions; and interspersed with diverting episodes; and that the greatest part of them was to have been executed in Verse; we shall have a tolerable idea of the extent and difficulty of the whole undertaking: and admiring, as we must, the vigor of that genius, which in an advanced age coud begin so vast a work, we shall rather lament than be surprised that it has been left imperfect.

Thomas Tyrwhitt, 1775-78, *An Introductory Discourse to the Canterbury Tales*

The characters of Chaucer's Pilgrims are the characters which compose all ages and nations. As one age falls another rises, different to mortal sight, but to immortals only the same; for we see the same characters repeated again and again, in animals, vegetables and minerals, and in men. Nothing new occurs in identical existence; accident ever varies, substance can never suffer change or decay. Of Chaucer's characters, as described in his *Canterbury Tales,* some of the names or titles are altered by time, but the characters themselves for ever remain unaltered; and, consequently, they are the physiognomies or lineaments of universal human life, beyond which nature never steps. Names alter, things never alter. I have known multitudes of those who would have been monks in the age of monkery, who in this deistical age are Deists. As Newton numbered the stars, and as Linnæus numbered the plants, so Chaucer numbered the classes of men. . . . It is necessary here to speak of Chaucer's own character, that I may set certain mistaken critics right in their conception of the humour and fun that occur on the journey. Chaucer is himself the great poetical observer of men, who in every age is born to record and eternise its acts. This he does as a master, as a father and superior, who looks down on their little follies, from the Emperor to the Miller, sometimes with severity, oftener with joke and sport. . . . Chaucer's characters live age after age. Every age is a Canterbury Pilgrimage; we all pass on, each sustaining one or other of these characters; nor can a child be born who is not one of these characters of Chaucer. . . . The reader will observe that Chaucer makes every one of his characters perfect in his kind; every one is an Antique Statue, the image of a class, and not of an imperfect individual.

William Blake, 1809, *Illustrated Catalogue of Pictures. Canterbury Poets, Blake,* pp. 244, 247, 250, 251

The metre of five accents, with couplet-rhyme, may have got its earliest name of "riding rhyme" from the *mounted* pilgrims of the Canterbury Tales. It was long used for light and trifling subjects; and by the critics of the six-

teenth century was very unfavourably contrasted with the stately ballet-stave.

Edwin Guest, 1838, *A History of English Rhythms,* vol. II, p. 238

In Canterbury, also, the pilgrim's inn is said to have continued to the present time, no longer, indeed, existing as an inn, but divided into a number of private tenements in High-street. The old inn mentioned by Chaucer was called the Checkers. It stands in High-street, at the corner of the lane leading to the Cathedral, just below the parade, on the left-hand side going into Canterbury. Its situation was just that which was most convenient for the pilgrims to Thomas à Becket's tomb. It was a very large inn, as was necessary for the enormous resort of votaries to the shrine of this pugnacious saint. It is now divided into several houses, and has been modernized externally, having no longer a trace of having been an inn. The way to the court-yard is through a narrow doorway passage, and around the court you see the only evidences of its antiquity, remains of carved wood-work, now whitewashed over.

William Howitt, 1847, *Homes and Haunts of the most Eminent British Poets,* vol. I, p. 11

The world has rightly considered the *Canterbury Tales* as the work by which Chaucer is to be judged. In truth, common renown forgets all the rest; and it is by the *Canterbury Tales* only that he can properly be said to be known to his countrymen. Here it is that he appears as possessing the versatility of poetical power which ranges from the sublime, through the romantic and the pathetic, to the rudest mirth—choosing subjects the most various, and treating all alike adequately. Here he discovers himself as the shrewd and curious observer, and close painter of manners. Here he writes as one surveying the world of man with enlarged and philosophical intuition, weighing good and evil in even scale. Here, more than in any other, he is master of his matter, disposing it at his discretion, and not carried away with or mastered by it. Here he is master, too, of his English, thriftily culling the fit word, not effusing a too exuberant stream of description. Here he has acquired his own art and his own style of versification, which is here to be studied accordingly.

John Wilson, 1845, "North's *Specimens of the British Critics,*" *Blackwood's Magazine,* vol. 57, p. 630

The Harleian manuscript, No. 7334, is by far the best manuscript of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* that I have yet examined, in regard both to antiquity and correctness. The hand-writing is one which would at first sight be taken by an experienced scholar for that of the latter part of the

fourteenth century, and it must have been written within a few years after 1400, and therefore soon after Chaucer's death and the publication of the *Canterbury Tales*. Its language has very little, if any, appearance of local dialect; and the text is in general extremely good, the variations from Tyrwhitt being usually for the better. Tyrwhitt appears not to have made much use of this manuscript, and he has not even classed it among those to which most credit is due.

Thomas Wright, 1847, ed. *The Canterbury Tales of Geoffrey Chaucer*, vol. I, p. xxxv

His method of proceeding in *The Canterbury Tales* is the most effective that could be devised for transmitting to subsequent ages an accurate expression of the social and moral development of his own. He never generalizes—he never falls into disquisitions—he never draws conclusions. He avoids all modes of treatment that might afterwards become wearisome or untintelligible; and, descending into the common life of the day, he shows us, as it were, the spirit of transition in actual operation amongst the different classes of the people, modifying their customs and opinions, drawing out into full play the salient points of the national character, and colouring even individual peculiarities to the most trivial details, which, in this aspect, acquire a special historical value. The humanity he thus imparts to his subjects invests them with a permanent interest, which neither the lapse of time, nor the revolutions of language, can impair or render obsolete; and the instruction which, in another shape, would become dry and heavy, is here made to assume the most attractive forms.

Robert Bell (John M. Jephson), 1854, ed. *Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, Introduction, p. 43

This is not only his greatest work, but it towers above all else that he has written, like some palace or cathedral ascending with its broad and lofty dimensions from among the common buildings of a city. His genius is another thing here altogether from what it is in his other writings. Elsewhere he seems at work only for the day that is passing over him; here, for all time. . . . Among ourselves at least, if we except Shakspeare, no other poet has yet arisen to rival the author of the *Canterbury Tales* in the entire assemblage of his various powers. Spenser's is a more aerial, Milton's a loftier, song; but neither possesses the wonderful combination of contrasted and almost opposite characteristics which we have in Chaucer:—the sportive fancy, painting and gilding everything, with the keen, observant, matter-of-fact spirit that looks through whatever it glances at; the soaring and creative imagination, with the homely sagacity, and healthy relish

for all the realities of things; the unrivalled tenderness and pathos, with the quaintest humor and the most exuberant merriment; the wisdom at once and the wit; the all that is best, in short, both in poetry and in prose, at the same time.

George L. Craik, 1861, *A Compendious History of English Literature and of the English Language,* vol. I, p. 313

Though the character of Griselda is not the original creation of Chaucer, he has filled up the outline with such a wealth of detail, and worked into it such beauty of colouring and expression—meekness, gentleness, tenderness, and piety—resignation, fortitude, and long-suffering—that he may well claim Griselda as his own. Whoever compares the heroine of Chaucer with that of Boccaccio in the original, notwithstanding all the beauty of the Italian narrative, will at once understand this.

John Francis Waller, 1870, *Pictures from English Literature,* p. 2

No poetry was ever more human than Chaucer's; none ever came more frankly and genially home to men than his *Canterbury Tales*. . . . It is the first time in English poetry that we are brought face to face, not with characters or allegories or reminiscences of the past, but with living and breathing men, men distinct in temper and sentiment, as in face or costume or mode of speech; and with this distinctness of each maintained throughout the story by a thousand shades of expression and action. It is the first time, too, that we meet with the dramatic power which not only creates each character, but combines it with its fellows; which not only adjusts each tale or jest to the temper of the person who utters it, but fuses all into a poetic unity. It is life in its largeness, its variety, its complexity, which surrounds us in the *Canterbury Tales*. In some of the stories, indeed, which were composed, no doubt, at an earlier time, there is the tedium of the old romance or the pedantry of the schoolman; but, taken as a whole, the poem is the work not of a man of letters, but of a man of action. Chaucer has received his training from war, courts, business, travel—a training not of books, but of life. And it is life that he loves—the delicacy of its sentiment, the breadth of its farce, its laughter and its tears, the tenderness of its Griseldas, or the Smollett-like adventures of the miller and the clerks. It is this largeness of heart, this wide tolerance, which enables him to reflect man for us as none but Shakespeare has ever reflected him, and to do this with a pathos, a shrewd sense, and kindly humor, a freshness and joyousness of feeling, that even Shakespeare has not surpassed.

John Richard Green, 1877, *History of the English People,* vol. I, bk. iv, ch. iv

In seeking to trace the origin and progress of the English novel as it is now written, we must record the first appearance of its special characteristics in the works of Chaucer. Here are first to be seen real human beings, endowed with human virtues and subject to human frailities; here fictitious characters are first represented amid the homely scenes of daily life; here they first become living realities whose nature and dispositions every one may understand, and with whose thoughts every one may sympathize.

Bayard Tuckerman, 1882, *A History of English Prose Fiction,* p. 43

The Knight's tale, in particular, naturally attracted the attention of the dramatists of the Elizabethan age, who were always on the lookout for suitable material. Upon it was founded an early play called *Palemon and Arcite* that has not come down. It was the work of Richard Edwards, and was produced in 1566 at Oxford University before Queen Elizabeth. A play with this title is also recorded by Henslowe under the year 1594 as having been acted four times. From the same tale also was avowedly taken the drama called *The Two Noble Kinsmen,* which when first printed in 1634, had on its title-page as authors the names of Shakspeare and Fletcher. Whether either had anything to do with it is still a debated question; but the tribute paid to Chaucer in the prologue furnishes important evidence as to the estimation in which the early poet continued to be held.

Thomas R. Lounsbury, 1891, *Studies in Chaucer,* vol. III, p. 68

As the Wife of Bath herself unrolls her own picture with a flippant ease and a delightful mixture of ingenuousness and confidential impudence not without wit, and begins with the greatest indignation to quote the sayings of learned woman-haters, the comic effect of her story and descriptions is raised to the highest pitch, and the satire loses very much of its bitterness, but nothing whatever of its pungency. We can almost hear, and see bodily before us, the well-to-do middle class Englishwoman, in her heavy and somewhat gaudy garments, her scarlet stockings, her red cheeks, her saucy looks, her sensual mouth, her quick, energetic movements, her glib tongue and penetrating voice; and what she relates becomes to us as vivid as if we had ourselves beheld the individual incidents.

Bernhard Ten Brink, 1892, *History of English Literature, (Wyclif, Chaucer, Earliest Drama, Renaissance),* tr. Robinson, p. 126

The "Tale of Melibeus" makes one doubt whether the change between the tenth century and the fourteenth was not for the worse. There are curious inanities in old, popular, edifying books, like the Dialogues of Gregory. But the "Tale of Melibeus" is beyond rivalry for its enjoyment of the rank-

est commonplaces. There is glow and unction about its mediocrity; the intolerable arguments of Dame Prudence are a masterpiece, as though written in an orgy and enthusiasm of flatness and insipidity. Why it was selected by Chaucer for translation is mysterious enough. Yet the monstrous virtue of Dame Prudence has affinities with some of the untruths in the *Canterbury Tales*—with Griselda, with the point of honour in the "Franklin's Tale"; after all, it is only an exaggeration of what is well known in all medieval literature: it is not a new element. It is hard to forgive, especially when one thinks that it was to this the innocent Sir Thopas was sacrificed. In one sense, however, the "Tale of Melibeus" displays the foundation of all Chaucer's works. The peculiarity of Chaucer is that with all his progress in his art he kept close to the general sense of his age, and had always, in some corner of his being, the average mind of the fourteenth century. To that part of him belong all his prose works. The "Tale of Melibeus" is representative of the ideas and tastes of millions of good souls. Being representative, it could not be alien from Chaucer.

W. P. Ker, 1893, *English Prose,* ed. Craik, vol. I, p. 42

The number of words now obsolete in the *Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales* is unusually high, and for this reason it should not be read the first among Chaucer's poems; nevertheless it usually is read first, and is so well known that little need here be said of it. For keen observation and vivid presentment this gallery of character-sketches has never been surpassed. The portraits, we should note, are all such as one traveller might draw of another. There is no attempt to show that the best of the pilgrims had their weak points, and the worst their good ones. For the best Chaucer has hearty admiration, for the worst a boundless tolerance, which yet only thinly cloaks the keenest satire. One and all he views from his holiday standpoint, building up his descriptions with such notes as he would naturally gather as he rode along with them on his pilgrimage—notes of dress, of speech and manner, of their talk about themselves and their doings—until we can see his fellow-pilgrims as clearly as if we, too, had mounted our rouncies and ridden along with them.

Alfred W. Pollard, 1893, *Chaucer* (*Literature Primers*), p. 115

The unrivalled array of poetic qualities, both of feeling and expression, which it presents to us, the grace and gaiety of the poet, his humour and pathos, his dramatic force of portaiture, the catholicity of his sympathies, never to be again approached in literature till the coming of Shakespeare, his fine broad artistic treatment of the human figure, the dewy freshness of his landscape studies, and the clear sunny atmosphere through which he looks out alike upon Nature and upon man—it is these things which

have raised the Father of English Poetry to the rank of one of the great poets of the world. It is in virtue of such things that that train of pilgrims which left Southwark for the shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury, on a certain day of April in or about the year 1383, remains so real to us, that the student still labours to fix the precise date of its departure and the time and places of its halts. It is for such reasons that these shadows of the poet's fancy are shadows more enduring than their substance, and that knight and squire, clerk and franklin, reeve and miller, pardoner and sompnour, prioress and nun, and wife much widowed, move still, and will ever move, before us across the great imaginative panorama of the past, joyous and immortal as a Bacchic procession on a frieze of Phidias.

H. D. Traill, 1894, *Social England, Introduction,* vol. I, p.xxxix

The idea of joining together a series of Tales by means of fitting them into a common frame-work is a very old one, and doubtless originated in the East. There is an English collection of this character known as *The Seven Sages,* of which various versions have come down to us. The earliest of these, as published in the second volume of Weber's Metrical Romances, has been dated about 1320; and is, at any rate, older than any of Chaucer's poems. Another collection, of a similar character, and likewise of Eastern origin, is a Latin work by Petrus Alphonsus, a converted Spanish Jew, entitled *De Clericali Disciplina.* See Dunlop's *History of Fiction,* chap. vii. From one of these Chaucer may have taken the general idea of arranging his tales in a connected series; and we must not forget that his *Legend of Good Women,* which was the immediate forerunner of his greater work, is likewise, practically, a collection of Tales, though sadly lacking in variety, as he discovered for himself in the course of writing it. It is highly improbable that he was indebted for the idea to *Boccaccio's Decamerone,* as has been sometimes hastily suggested; since we might, in that case, have expected that he would also have drawn from that collection the plot of some one of his tales; which is not found to be the case. The Clerk's Tale occurs, indeed, in the *Decamerone;* but we know it to have been borrowed from Petrarch's Latin version of it. The Franklin's Tale has some resemblance to another tale in the same collection, but was evidently not taken from it directly, and the same is true in other cases; so that we are quite justified in supposing that Chaucer was wholly unacquainted, at first hand, with Boccaccio's work.

Walter W. Skeat, 1894, ed. *Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer,* vol. III, p. 371

Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales, first edition,* (12). J. West (1773), £47, 15s. —George III. J. Ratcliffe (1776), £6. White Knights supplementary sale

(1820), £31, 10s.—T. Payne, (imperfect); not recorded by Blades. The highest price recorded by Blades is £300, given by Mr. Huth at Lilly's sale, 1861. In 1896 two copies (both imperfect) were sold for over £1000; Mrs. Corbet's (Barlaston Hall), wanting nineteen leaves, £1020; R. E. Saunders (wanting only two leaves, a few wormed, lower margins in Melibeus mended), £1880. Earl of Ashburnham (1897), £720—Pickering & Chatto (imperfect, also some leaves from a shorter copy).

Henry B. Wheatley, 1898, *Prices of Books,* p. 200

Rejected Poems

It must suffice to say here that most of the later editions, since the publication of Tyrwhitt's remarks on the subject, reject many of these additional pieces, but still unadvisedly admit the poems entitled "The Court of Love," "The Complaint of the Black Knight," "Chaucer's Dream," "The Flower and the Leaf," and "The Cuckoo and the Nightingale." Of these, the "Complaint of the Black Knight" is now known to be by Lydgate; "The Flower and the Leaf" cannot be earlier than 1450, and was probably written, as it purports to be, by a lady; whilst "The Court of Love" can hardly be earlier than 1500, and "Chaucer's Dream" (so called) is of still later date. Nothing but a complete ignorance of the history of the English language can connect these fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century poems with Chaucer. The only poem, in the above set, which can possibly be as old as the fourteenth-century, is "The Cuckoo and the Nightingale." There is no evidence of any kind to connect it with Chaucer; and Professor Lounsberry decisively rejects it, on the internal evidence. It admits a few rimes such as Chaucer nowhere employs.

Walter W. Skeat, 1894, ed. *The Student's Chaucer,* Introduction, p. xv

Testament of Love (C. 1387)

Chaucer seems to have been a right Wicklevian, or else there never was any; and that, all his works almost, if they be thoroughly advised, will testify (albeit it be done in mirth and covertly), and especially the latter end of his third book of the *Testament of Love;* for there purely he toucheth the highest matter, that is, the Communion; wherein, except a man be altogether blind, he may espy him at the full.

John Foxe, 1562, *Acts and Monuments of the Church*

It is probable that the lapse of a single generation would have blotted out from the memory of his countrymen these censures upon the father of Eng-

lish poetry. Who now appears as his accuser? Chaucer: Chaucer only. We have no evidence but what we draw from this production, that he was ever concerned in the turmoils of the city, that he was an exile, a prisoner in the Tower, and that he was finally led by resentment or by terror to the dishonourable act of impeaching his confederates. Little did the poet think, when he sat down to write this laborious apology for his conduct, that he was thereby perpetuating an imputation, which without his interference Time was preparing to blot out for ever from the records of memory while his poetical compositions were destined to render him dear to the lovers of the muse as long as the English language shall endure. How feeble and erroneous are the calculations of the wisest of mankind!

William Godwin, 1803, *Life of Geoffrey Chaucer*, vol. IV, p. 55

I have lately made a curious discovery as to the *Testament of Love*. The first paragraph begins with a large capital M; the second with a large capital A; and so on. By putting together all the letters thus pointed out, we at once have an acrostic, forming a complete sentence. The sentence is—MARGARET OF VIRTW, HAVE MERCI ON TSKNVI. Of course the last word is expressed as an anagram, which I decipher as KITSVN, i. e. Kitsun, the author's name. The whole piece is clearly addressed to a lady named Margaret, and contains frequent reference to the virtues of pearls, which were supposed to possess healing powers. Even if "Kitsun" is not the right reading, we learn something; for it is quite clear that TSKNVI cannot possibly represent the name of Chaucer.

Walter W. Skeat, 1894, *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, vol. V, p. xii, note

Court of Love (C. 1500)

I am induced by the internal evidence to consider it as one of Chaucer's genuine productions.

Thomas Tyrwhitt, 1775-78, *An Account of the Works of Chaucer*, p. 445

Now I am not particularly concerned to stand up for the *Court of Love* as Chaucer's, for the simple reason that my business is with his character as a poet; and it seems to me so thoroughly Chaucerian in spirit, that my impressions of the man would be the same whether it was written by him or not. In its curious mediæval doctrine on the subject of love, it is in complete harmony with the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, —Cupid's martyrology, the Lives of the Saints of Love. If not written by Chaucer, it must have been written by a very clever and observant

imitator—one might even say, looking to small coincidences, a deliberate and dexterous forger. The great difficulty in the way of not assigning the *Court of Love* or the *Flower and the Leaf* to Chaucer is this, that between him and Surrey there is no English poem half so good, and that it is next to incredible that the name of any poet capable of such work should have perished. If Chaucer did not write it, who did? This, I take it, is the feeling of everybody who still thinks it possible that Chaucer may have been the author. That the grammatical differences, which are doubtless very striking, should have been introduced by a transcriber, seems to them more likely on the whole than that a nameless poet, in an age whose known poets never rise anywhere near such a level, should have produced works that have received enthusiastic admiration from such judges as Dryden and Mr. Swinburne.

William Minto, 1874-85, *Characteristics of English Poets,* p. 15

The Court of Love must be a composition considerably later in date than *The Temple of Glass*. A complete master of his metrical instrument, the author is also far superior to Lydgate in fancy and invention: he knows how to construct a poetical action, and how to make a proper use of the machinery of personification. He is, however, working on precisely the same conventional theme; and the peculiarly interesting feature in his poems is, that the advance in literary and allegorical skill is accompanied by a distinct decline in the delicacy of chivalrous manners.

W. J. Courthope, 1895, *A History of English Poetry,* vol. I, p. 359

General

My maister Chaucer, wtih his fresh commedies,
Is deed, alas! chefe poete of Bretayne,
That sometimes made full pietous tragedies,
The fall of princes, he did also complayne,
As he that was of makyng soverayne,
Whom all this lande of right ought preferre,
Sithe of our language he was the lode-sterre
By hym that was, yf I shall not fayne,
Floure of Poetes, thorugh out of all Bretayne,
Whiche sothly had moost of excellence
In Rethoryke and in eloquence.
Rede his makyng, who lyst the trouthe fynde
Whivh never shall appallen in my mynde,
But always freshe ben in my memorye,

To whom be yeve pryse, honour and glorye
Of well sayeing.

John Lydgate, c. 1420, *The Story of Thebes,* Prologue

O reverend Chaucere, rose of rethoris all,
As in oure tong ane flour imperiall,
That raise in Britane evir, quho redis rycht,
Thou beris of makaris the tryumph riall;
Thy fresch anamalit termes celicall
This matir coud illumynit have full brycht:
Was thou noucht of oure Inglisch all the lycht,
Surmounting eviry tong terrestriall,
Alls fer as Mayes morow dois mydnycht.

William Dunbar, c. 1508, *Golden Targe*

The god of shepheards, Tityrus, is dead,
Who taught mee homely, as I can, to make;
Hee, whilst hee lived, was the soveraigne head
Of shepheards all that bene with love ytake:
Well couth hee waile his Woes, and lightly flake
The flames which love within his heart had bredd,
And tell us mery tales to keepe us wake,
The while our sheepe about us safely fedde.

Edmund Spenser, 1579, *Shepheards Calender, June,* ed. Collier, p. 75

Our father Chaucer hath vsed the same libertie in feete and measures that the Latinists do vse: and who so euer do peruse and well consider his workes, he shall finde that although his lines are not alwayes of one selfe same number of Syllables, yet beyng redde by one that hath vnderstanding, the longest verse and that which hath most Syllables in it, will fall (to the eare) correspondent vnto that whiche hath fewest sillables in it: and like wise that whiche hath in it fewest syllables, shalbe founde yet to consist of woordes that haue such naturall sounde, as may seeme equall in length to a verse which hath many moe sillables of lighter accentes.

George Gascoigne, 1575, *Certayne notes of Instruction Concerning the Making of Verse or Ryme in English,* ed. Arber, p. 34

But of them all particularly this is myne opinion, that *Chaucer* with *Gower, Lidgat,* and *Harding* for their antiquitie ought to haue the first place and *Chaucer* as the most renowned of them all, for the much learning appeareth to be in him aboue any of the rest. And though many of his bookes be

but bare translations out of the Latin and French, yet are they wel handled, as his bookes of *Troilus and Creffeid,* and the *Romant of the Rose,* whereof he translated but one halfe, the deuice was *Iohn de Mehunes* a French Poet.

George Puttenham, 1589, *The Arte of English Poesie,* ed. Arber, p. 75

They who attempted verse in English down to Chaucer's time made an heavy pudder, and are always miserably put to it for a word to clink; which commonly falls so awkward and unexpectedly, as dropping from the clouds by some machine or miracle. Chaucer found an Herculean labour on his hands, and did perform to admiration. He seized all Provencal, French, or Latin that came in his way, gives them a new garb and livery, and mingles them amongst our English: turns out English gouty or superannuated, to place in their room the foreigners fit for service, trained and accustomed to poetical discipline.

Thomas Rymer, 1693, *A Short View of the Tragedy of the Last Age*

As he is the father of English poetry, so I hold him in the same degree of veneration as the Grecians held Homer, or the Romans Virgil. He is a perpetual fountain of good sense; learned in all sciences; and, therefore, speaks properly on all subjects. As he knew what to say, so he knows also when to leave off; a continence which is practised by few writers, and scarcely by any of the ancients, excepting Virgil and Horace. . . . Chaucer followed nature everywhere, but was never so bold to go beyond her. . . . The verse of Chaucer, I confess, is not harmonious to us; but it is like the eloquence of one whom Tacitus commends, it was *auribus istius temporis accommodata.* They who lived with him, and some time after him, thought it musical; and it continues so, even in our judgment, if compared with the numbers of Lidgate and Gower, his contemporaries:—there is the rude sweetness of a Scotch tune in it, which is natural and pleasing, though not perfect. It is true, I cannot go so far as he* who published the last edition of him; for he would make us believe the fault is in our ears, and that there were really ten syllables in a verse where we find but nine: but this opinion is not worth confuting; it is so gross and obvious an error, that common sense (which is a rule in everything but matters of faith and revelation) must convince the reader, that equality of numbers, in every verse which we call heroic, was either not known, or not always practised, in Chaucer's age. It were an easy matter to produce some thousands of his

*Thomas Speght.

verses, which are lame for want of half a foot, and sometimes a whole one, and which no pronunciation can make otherwise. We can only say, that he lived in the infancy of our poetry, and that nothing is brought to perfection at the first. . . . Chaucer, I confess, is a rough diamond, and must first be polished, ere he shines. I deny not likewise, that, living in our early days of poetry, he writes not always of a piece; but sometimes mingles trivial things with those of greater moment. Sometimes also, though not often, he runs riot, like Ovid, and knows not when he has said enough.

John Dryden, 1700, *Preface to the Fable, Works,* ed. Scott and Saintsbury, vol. XI, pp. 223, 224, 233

Chaucer is regarded rather as an old, than a good poet. We look upon his poems as venerable relics, not as beautiful compositions; as pieces better calculated to gratify the antiquarian than the critic. He abounds not only in strokes of humour, which is commonly supposed to be his sole talent, but of pathos, and sublimity, not unworthy of a more refined age. His old manners, his romantic arguments, his wildness of painting, his simplicity and antiquity of expression, transport us into some fairy region, and are all highly pleasing to the imagination. It is true that his uncouth and unfamiliar language disgusts and deters many readers; but the principal reason of his being so little known, and so seldom taken in hand, is the convenient opportunity of reading him with pleasure and facility in modern imitations.

Thomas Warton, 1754, *Observations on the Fairy Queen of Spenser,* sec. V

The first of our versifiers who wrote poetically. He does not, however, appear to have deserved all the praise he has received, or all the censure he has suffered. Dryden, who, mistaking genius for learning, in confidence of his abilities, ventured to write of what he had not examined, ascribes to Chaucer the first refinement of our numbers, the first production of easy and natural rhymes, and the improvement of our language, by words borrowed from the more polished languages of the continent. Skinner contrarily blames him in harsh terms for having vitiated his native speech by whole cartloads of foreign words. But he that reads the works of Gower will find smooth numbers and easy rhymes, of which Chaucer is supposed to be the inventor, and the French words, whether good or bad, of which Chaucer is charged as the importer. Some innovations he might probably make, like others, in the infancy of our poetry, which the paucity of books does allow us to discover with particular exactness; but the words of Gower and Lydgate sufficiently evince that his diction was in general like that of his contemporaries; and some improvements he undoubtedly made

by the various dispositions of the rhymes, and by the mixture of different numbers, in which he seems to have been happy and judicious.

Samuel Johnson, 1755, *Dictionary of the English Language*

Chaucer, notwithstanding the praises bestowed on him, I think obscene and contemptible:—he owes his celebrity merely to his antiquity, which he does not deserve so well as Pierce Plowman, or Thomas of Erceldoune.

Lord Byron, 1807, *Detached Thoughts*

The influence of Chaucer is conspicuous in all our early literature; and, more recently, not only Pope and Dryden have been beholden to him, but, in the whole society of English writers, a large unacknowledged debt is easily traced. One is charmed with the opulence which feeds so many pensioners. But Chaucer is a huge borrower. Chaucer, it seems, drew continually, through Lydgate and Caxton, from Guido di Colonna, whose Latin romance of the Trojan war was in turn a compilation from Dares Phrygius, Ovid and Statius. Then Petrarch, Boccaccio and the Provençal poets, are his benefactors: the *Romaunt of the Rose* is only judicious translation from William of Lorris and John of Meun: *Troilus and Creseide,* from Lollius of Urbino: The *Cock and the Fox,* from the *Lais* of Marie: *The House of Fame,* from the French or Italian: and poor Gower he uses as if he were only a brick-kiln or stone-quarry, out of which to build his house. He steals by this apology,—that what he takes has no worth where he finds it, and the greatest where he leaves it.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1850,
Shakespeare; or, the Poet, Representative Men

Indeed I *do* admire him, or rather love him. In my opinion, he is fairly worth a score or two of Spensers. He had a knowledge of human nature, and not of doll-making and *fantoccini* dressing. . . . Pardon me if I say I would rather see Chaucer quite alone, in the dew of his sunny morning, than with twenty clever gentlefolks about him, arranging his shoestrings and buttoning his doublet. I like even his *language*. I will have no hand in breaking his dun but rich-painted glass, to put in (if clearer) much thinner panes.

Walter Savage Landor, 1851, *Letter to R. H. Horne,*
Letters of Mrs. Browning, vol. I, p. 78

There is something in him of the disinterestedness that made the Greeks masters in art. His phrase is never importunate. His simplicity is that of elegance, not of poverty. The quiet unconcern with which he says his best things is peculiar to him among English poets, though Goldsmith, Ad-

dison, and Thackeray have approached it in prose. He prattles inadvertantly away, and all the while, like the princess in the story, lets fall a pearl at every other word.

James Russell Lowell, 1870-90, *Chaucer, Prose Works,*
Riverside ed., vol. III, p. 356

He is like a precocious and poetical child, who mingles in his love-dreams quotations from his prayer-book and recollections of his alphabet. Even in the *Canterbury Tales* he repeats himself, unfolds artless developments, forgets to concentrate his passion or his idea. He begins a jest, and scarcely ends it. He dilutes a bright colouring in a monotonous stanza. His voice is like that of a boy breaking into manhood. At first a manly and firm accent is maintained, then a shrill sweet sound shows that his growth is not finished, and that his strength is subject to weakness.

H. A. Taine, 1871, *History of English Literature,*
tr. Van Laun, vol. I, bk. i, ch. iii, p. 131

His range, is extremely limited, but within the limits his landscape is exquisitely fresh, natural, and true in spite of its being conventional. The fact is, though the elements of the scenery were ready made, the composition of them gave great scope to originality, and Chaucer being a man of unique individuality, could not adopt the landscape even of those poems which he translated without making alterations; and being an Englishman, could not write about the May morning without introducing its English peculiarities. Moreover, the delightful and simple familiarity of the poet with the meadows, brooks, and birds, and his love of them, has the effect of making every common aspect of nature new; the May morning is transfigured by his enjoyment of it; the grass of the field is seen as those in Paradise beheld it; the dew lies on our heart as we go forth with the poet in the dawning, and the wind blows past our ear like the music of an old song heard in the days of childhood. Half this power lies in the sweet simplicity of the words and in the pleasant flowing of the metre.

Stopford A. Brooke, 1871, "The Descriptive Poetry of Chaucer,"
Macmillan's Magazine, vol. 24, p. 269

Chaucer is not one of the great classics. His poetry transcends and effaces, easily and without effort, all the romance-poetry of Catholic Christendom; it transcends and effaces all the English poetry contemporary with it, it transcends and effaces all the English poetry subsequent to it down to the age of Elizabeth. Of such avail is poetic truth of substance, in its natural and necessary union with poetic truth of style. And yet, I say, Chaucer is

not one of the great classics. He has not their accent. . . . However we may account for its absence, something is wanting, then, to the poetry of Chaucer, which poetry must have before it can be placed in the glorious class of the best. And there is no doubt what that something is. It is the σπουδαιότης, the high and excellent seriousness, which Aristotle assigns as one of the grand virtues of poetry. The substance of Chaucer's poetry, his view of things and his criticism of life, has largeness, freedom, shrewdness, benignity; but it has not this high seriousness. Homer's criticism of life has it, Dante's has it, Shakespeare's has it. It is this chiefly which gives to our spirits what they can rest upon; and with the increasing demands of our modern ages upon poetry, this virtue of giving us what we can rest upon will be more and more highly esteemed. A voice from the slums of Paris, fifty or sixty years after Chaucer, the voice of poor Villon out of his life of riot and crime, has at its happy moments (as, for instance, in the last stanza of *La Belle Heaulmière*) more of this important poetic virtue of seriousness than all the productions of Chaucer. But its apparition in Villon, and in men like Villon, is fitful; the greatness of the great poets, the power of their criticism of life, is that their virtue is sustained. To our praise, therefore, of Chaucer as a poet there must be this limitation; he lacks the high seriousness of the great classics, and therewith an important part of their virtue. Still, the main fact for us to bear in mind about Chaucer is his sterling value according to that real estimate which we firmly adopt for all poets. He has poetic truth of substance, though he has not high poetic seriousness, and corresponding to his truth of substance he has an exquisite virtue of style and manner. With him is born our real poetry.

Matthew Arnold, 1880, *The English Poets*, ed. Ward, General Introduction, vol. I, p. xxxiv, *Essays in Criticism*, Second Series, p. 31

Great poet as he was, there is nothing of the prophet about him—the *mens divinor* is absent. With Dante and Petrarch he justly ranks in what has been called the triumvirate of the mediæval poets; but his work shows no sign whatever of their patriotic passion, none of their interest in statesmanship and politics: to take a phrase from the *Commedia*, he cannot discern even the tower of the heavenly City. Thus, although Chaucer heads magnificently the long list of our poets, and has never wanted some of the honour which was paid to Homer in his own land, yet I think he must be regarded as essentially retrospective; nay, in a certain sense, if I may venture on the word, superficial. In his brilliant criticism of the humours of his day, in his freshness and lucidity of style, in the movement of his narrative, he is modern. But in the choice of subjects, in the general matter of his tale, in the feelings with which he seems to look upon life, he scarcely rises above the showy court-atmosphere of Edward's reign. It is less the

dawn of modern ways in thought and literature which we see in him, than the gorgeous sunset of chivalry:—his poetry reflects the earlier rays of the Italian Renaissance, but its massive substance is essentially mediæval. . . . He is among our greatest poets; but no other among them keeps so steadily to the mere average level—one might almost hint, the *bourgeois* level, of his time, as Chaucer; he is of his age, not above it.

Francis Turner Palgrave, 1888, "Chaucer and the Italian Rensaissance," *The Nineteenth Century*, vol. XXIV, pp. 344, 355

There is one particular in which his merits in reference to the literature are simply transcendent. He overcame its natural tendencies to a dull seriousness which could sometimes be wrought into vigorous invective, but had little power to fuse the spirtual element of poetry with the purely intellectual. Into the stolid English nature, which may be earnest, but evinces an almost irresistible inclination toward heaviness, he brought a lightness, a grace, a delicacy of fancy, a refined sportiveness even upon the most unrefined themes, which had never been known before save on the most infinitesimal scale, and has not been known too much since. Nor is this the only distinctive characteristic in which Chaucer excels. There is no other English author so absolutely free, not merely from effort, but from the remotest suggestion of effort. Shakspeare mounts far higher; yet with him there are times when we seem to hear the flapping of wings, to be vaguely conscious that he is lashing his imagination to put forth increased exertions. But in Chaucer no slightest trace of strain is to be detected.

Thomas R. Lounsbury, 1891, *Studies in Chaucer*, vol. III, p. 444

In 1500 his popularity was at its height. During the latter part of the sixteenth century it began to decline. From that date till the end of William III's reign—in spite of the influence which he undoubtedly exercised over Spenser, and in spite of the respectful allusions to him in Sidney, Puttenham, Drayton, and Milton—his fame had become rather a tradition than a reality. In the following age the good-natured tolerance of Dryden was succeeded by the contempt of Addison and the supercilious patronage of Pope. Between 1700 and 1782 nothing seemed more probable than that the writings of the first of England's narrative poets would live chiefly in the memory of antiquarians. In little more than half a century afterwards we find him placed, with Shakspeare and Milton, on the highest pinnacle of poetic renown.

John Churton Collins, 1895, *Essays and Studies*, p. 107

In many ways he was still in bondage to the mediæval, and wholly uncritical, tradition. One classic, we may almost say, was as good to him as

another. He seems to have placed Ovid on a line with Virgil; and the company in his House of Fame is undeniably mixed. His judgments have the healthy instinct of the consummate artist. They do not show, as those of his master, Petrarch, unquestionably do, the discrimination and the tact of the born critic.

C. E. Vaughan, 1896, *English Literary Criticism,* Introduction, p. ix

The prosody of Chaucer's later and more elaborate works is not, as was so long supposed, an arbitrary or a loose one. Even Dryden knew no better than to discover in the verse of the *Canterbury Tales* "a rude sweetness of a Scotch tune"; it is obvious that he was quite unable to scan it. It was, on the contrary, not merely not "rude," but an artistic product of the utmost delicacy and niceness, a product which borrowed something from the old national measure, but was mainly an introduction into English of the fixed prosodies of the French and the Italians, the former for octosyllabic, the latter for decasyllabic verse. The rules of both, but especially the latter, are set, and of easy comprehension; to learn to read Chaucer with a fit appreciation of the liquid sweetness of his versification is as easy an accomplishment as to learn to scan classical French verse, or easier. But it must be remembered that, in its polished art, it was a skill fully known only to its founder, and that, with Chaucer's death, the power to read his verses as he wrote them seems immediately to have begun to disappear. Chaucer gave English poetry an admirable prosody, but it was too fine a gift to be appreciated by those for whom it was created.

Edmund Gosse, 1897, *Short History of Modern English Literature,* p. 24

JOHN GOWER

1325?-1408

Born about 1325: died in the priory of St. Mary Overies, Southwark, 1408. An English poet. Little is known of his early life, but he appears to have lived in Kent and to have been a man of wide reading. He was well known at court in his later years. His principal work, the *Confessio Amantis* (written in English, probably in 1386), was originally dedicated to Richard II, but in 1394 he changed the dedication to Henry of Lancaster (afterward Henry IV). Caxton printed it in 1483. Among his other works are *Speculum Meditantis* (written in French, recently found) and *Vox Clamantis* (a poem written in Latin, begun in 1381). After the accession of Henry VI, Gower, then an old man, added a supplement, the *Tripartite Council.* It treats of occurrences of the time, and the strength of its aspi-

rations and teaching caused Chaucer to call him "the moral Gower." *Ballades* and other poems (mostly in French) were printed in 1818.

Benjamin E. Smith, ed. 1894-97, *The Century Cyclopedia of Names,* p. 451

SEE: *Works,* ed. G. C. Macaulay, 1899-1902, 4v.; John H. Fisher, *John Gower: Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer,* 1964.

PERSONAL

Confessio Amantis (1386?)

And who so ever in redynge of this worke doth consider it well, shall fynde that it is plentifully stuffed and fournished with manifolde eloquent reasons, sharpe and quicke argumentes, and examples of great aucthoritie, perswadynge unto vertue, not only taken out of the poets, oratours, historie-writers, and philosophers, but also out of the holy scripture. There is to my dome no man but that he maie by readinge of this worke get righte great knowledge, as well for the underdstandynge of many and divers auctours, whose reasons, sayenges, and histories, are translated in to this worke, as for the pleintie of English words and vulgars, besides the furtherance of the life to vertue.

Thomas Berthelette, 1532, ed. *Gower's Confessio Amantis,* Dedication

As Gower wrote much in French, it is but natural, that there should be in his English a large proportion of Norman-French words; even in the spelling, in which he adheres, if we go back to the more ancient MSS, to the form used by the French writers of his day. Yet the Saxon ingredient in his language is as large as in the works of his great contemporary, and comprises a considerable number of words, which at present are either obsolete, or have altogether changed their meaning. There are very few examples of alliteration and other characteristics of pure Saxonism. . . . His sentences are often diffuse, and ungrammatical; and it was evidently no easy task for him to compose this long poem in English.

Reinhold Pauli, 1856, ed. *Confessio Amantis,* Introductory Essay, vol. I, pp. xxxv, xxxvi

Old Classic, and Romance tales come into it, and are fearfully stretched out; and there are pedagogic Latin rubrics at the margin and wearisome repetitions, with now and then faint scent of prettinesses stolen from French *fabliaux:* but unless your patience is heroic, you will grow tired of him; and the monotonous, measured, metallic jingle of his best verse is provokingly like the "Caw-caw" of the prim, black raven. He had

art, he had learning, he had good-will; but he could not weave words into the thrushlike melodies of Chaucer. Even the clear and beautiful type of the Bell & Daldy edition does not make him entertaining. You will tire before you are half through the Prologue, which is as long, and stiff as many a sermon. And if you skip to the stories, they will not win you to liveliness: Pauline's grace and mishaps are dull; and the sharp, tragic twang about Gurmunde's skull, and the vengeance of Rosemunde (from the old legend which Paul the Deacon tells) does not wake one's blood.

Donald G. Mitchell, 1889, *English Lands, Letters and Kings, From Celt to Tudor,* p. 128

For if there be one indisputable fact in literary history, it is that Gower did not have the fame of Chaucer in his own age, and that he has never had it in any age that followed. Upon this matter enough has been said in the preceding pages to show that the reputation for good sense and good taste of the contemporaries of the two poets needs no defence upon this score. The same remark can be made of their immediate successors. Later times continue to bear testimony simliar to that furnished by the earlier. The mere fact that no edition of the *Confessio Amantis* appeared from 1554 until 1857 disposes of itself of the fancy that Gower's popularity ever stood for a moment in rivalry with that of Chaucer. Caxton had, indeed, printed his poem. During the sixteenth century two other editions of it appeared. These were sufficient to supply the demand both for that time and for the three hundred years that followed.

Thomas R. Lounsbury, 1891, *Studies in Chaucer,* vol. III, p. 70

General

Gower sauing for his good and graue moralities, had nothing in him highly to be commended, for his verse was homely and without good measure, his wordes strained much deale out of the French writers, his ryme rested, and in his inuentions small subtillitie: the aplications of his moralities are the best in him, and yet those many times very grossely bestowed, neither doth the substance of his workes sufficiently aunswere the subtilitie of his titles.

George Puttenham, 1589, *The Arte of English Poesie,* ed. Arber, p. 76

His education was liberal and uncircumscribed, his course of reading extensive, and he tempered his severer studies with a knowledge of life. By a critical cultivation of his native language, he laboured to reform its irregularities, and to establish an English style. In these respects he resembled

his friend and contemporary Chaucer: but he participated no considerable portion of Chaucer's spirit, imagination, and elegance. His language is tolerably perspicuous, and his versification often harmonious: but his poetry is of a grave and sententious turn. He has much good sense, solid reflection, and useful observation. But he is serious and didactic on all occasions: he preserves the tone of the scholar and the moralist on the most lively topics. For this reason he seems to have been characterised by Chaucer with the appellation of the Morall Gower. But his talent is not confined to English verse only. He wrote also in Latin; and copied Ovid's elegiacs with some degree of purity, and with fewer false quantities and corrupt phrases, than any of our countrymen had yet exhibited since the twelfth century.

Thomas Warton, 1778-81, *The History of English Poetry*, sec. xix

Side by side with Chaucer comes Gower, who is ungratefully disregarded too often, because side by side with Chaucer. He who rides in the king's chariot will miss the people's "hic est." Could Gower be considered apart, there might be found signs in him of an independent royalty, however his fate may seem to lie in waiting for ever in his brother's ante-chamber, like Napoleon's tame kings. To speak our mind, he has been much undervalued. He is nailed to a comparative degree; and everybody seems to make it a condition of speaking for him, that something be called inferior within him, and something superior out of him. He is laid down flat, as a dark background for "throwing out" Chaucer's lights; he is used as a που στω for leaping up into the empyrean of Chaucer's praise. This is not just nor worthy.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 1842-63, *The Book of the Poets*, p. 115

Doubtless here and there he contains a remnant of brilliancy and grace. He is like an old secretary of a Court of Love, Andre le Chapelain or any other, who would pass the day in solemnly registering the sentences of ladies, and in the evening, partly asleep on his desk, would see in a half-dream their sweet smile and their beautiful eyes. The ingenious but exhausted vein of Charles of Orléans still flows in his French ballads. He has the same fine delicacy, almost a little finicky. The poor little poetic spring flows yet in thin transparent films under the smooth pebbles, and murmurs with a babble, pretty, but so weak that at times you cannot hear it. But dull is the rest!

H. A. Taine, 1871, *History of English Literature*, tr. Van Laun, vol. I, bk. i, ch. iii, p. 136

It would be a very great mistake to minimise or, like many, to pass by as negligible the contribution of Gower to English literature. Even in itself, if it has not the very highest qualities, it is far above contempt. Coleridge's rather pettish wish that Chalmers had given Lydgate instead, must have been caused either by very excusable ignorance of Lydgate's actual worth; or by a complete failure to recognise the formal superiority of Gower and the importance of his priority in time; or perhaps, and even probably, by that capriciousness which too often mars Coleridge's criticism. The contemporaries of Chaucer and Gower, and the immediate successors who entered into their labours, made no such mistake, though in the fifteenth century they sometimes, and not quite unjustly, promoted Lydgate himself to the actual company of his masters. That, historically and as a master, Gower had a real right to be ranked with Chaucer, is as unquestionable as that Gower is vastly Chaucer's inferior as a poet.

George Saintsbury, 1898, *A Short History of English Literature*, p. 140

THOMAS HOCCLEVE [OCCLEVE]

C. 1368-1450

Hoccleve, or Occleve, Thomas, poet, was born about 1368, was a clerk in the Exchequer, and was writing verse so late as 1448. His chief work is a free but tedious version of the *De Regimine Principum* of Ægidius Romanus, over five thousand lines in length, and written in Chaucer's seven-line stanza. In the prologue (about one-third of the whole) the author tells us a good deal about himself, and speaks out his grief for the death of his great master Chaucer. The poem was edited by T. Wright for the Roxburghe Club in 1860. Many other poems are ascribed to Hoccleve, some still unprinted, and some of them stories from the *Gesta Romanorum*. His *Minor Poems* and *Compleint* were edited by Dr. Furnivall for the Early English Text Society in 1892, the first-fruits of a complete edition.

Patrick and Groome, eds., 1897, *Chambers's Biographical Dictionary*, p. 493

We may suppose that he took his name from his birthplace, and was born in Bedfordshire, in the small parish of Hockliffe, about five miles from Dunstable. The only alternative would be Ockley, in Surrey. The old confusion with the aspirate has caused the name to be written both "Hoccleve" and "Occleve." But in a copy of *The Governail of Princes*, which the poet wrote with his own hand, the name occurs in the text, and is written "Occleve." Another day he might have written "Hoccleve." . . . But the name is Occleve in the only place where we are sure, or nearly sure, that he himself has written it.

Henry Morley, 1890, *English Writers*, vol. VI, p. 122

SEE: *Works*, ed. F. J. Furnivall and Israel Gollancz, 1892-1925, 3v.

A very famous English poet in his time which was the reign of king Henry the fourth, and Henry the fifth; to which last he dedicated his *Government of a Prince,* the chiefly remember'd of what he writ in poetry, and so much the more famous he is by being remembered to have been the disciple of the most famed Chaucer.

Edward Phillips, 1675, *Theatrum Poetarum Anglicanorum,* ed. Brydges, p. 19

Occleve is a feeble writer, considered as a poet: and his chief merit seems to be, that his writings contributed to propagate and establish those improvements in our language which were now beginning to take place. . . . The titles of Occleve's pieces . . . indicate a coldness of genius.

Thomas Warton, 1778-81, *History of English Poetry,* sec. xx

Occleve speaks of himself as Chaucer's scholar. He has, at least, the merit of expressing the sincerest enthusiasm for his master. But it is difficult to controvert the character which has been generally assigned to him, that of a flat and feeble writer. Excepting the adoption of his story of Fortunatus, by William Browne, in his pastorals, and the modern republication of a few of his pieces, I know not of any public compliment which has ever been paid to his poetical memory.

Thomas Campbell, 1819, *An Essay on English Poetry*

On the whole, Occleve's verse must be judged rather by its quantity than its quality. His admission into the ranks of our English writers of note is owing to the circumstances of his writing in a barren age, when every versifier was a man of mark.

William Francis Collier, 1861, *A History of English Literature,* p. 69

He is supposed to have been born in 1370, and he emerges at the Court of Richard II. in 1387. The luxurious extravagance of that Court found in him a congenial spirit. He could never pass the sign of Bacchus, with its invitation to thirsty passengers to moisten their clay, so long, at least, as he had anything in his purse; and he spent much money in the temples of a goddess of still more questionable character. He was a favourite among cooks and taverners, from the circumstances that he always paid them what they asked. Only two men of his acquaintance could equal him in drinking at night and lying in bed in the morning. The only thing that preserved his life from the brawls incident to such habits was an invincible cowardice: he never traduced men except in a whisper. All this we know

from his own humorous confessions. He tells us also that his excesses exhausted his money, although he held a valuable office—and impaired his health, though his nature had given him a strong constitution.

William Minto, 1874-85, *Characteristics of English Poets,* p. 71

A Chaucer "sans eyes, sans ears, sans teeth, sans everything."

Emelyn W. Washburn, 1884, *Studies in Early English Literature,* p. 91

Occleve is a good, harmless fellow, who has read with advantage many books, has observed correctly all sorts of things within the circle of his experience, and has thought much. To this must be added the gift of easy poetic composition, and a decided talent for form, which he happily modeled on Chaucer's style. In the clearness of his diction, and occasionally in the excellent choice of his expressions in the construction of his verses and stanzas, he comes nearer to the great model than almost any of the poets of the fifteenth century. Everywhere we can trace the influence of the master, without being able to call it mere imitation. Direct reminiscences are very seldom used in a wrong place. Occleve has his own style; he does not not attempt a rivalry with the style of his model, which is pithy, forcible, vivid, and significant in every line, but he knows how to ingratiate himself easily with his readers, both to their pleasure and profit. In the long run, indeed, the want of any strong colors in his broad descriptions becomes insipid.

Bernhard Ten Brink, 1892, *History of English Literature (Wyclif, Chaucer, Earliest Drama, Renaissance),* tr. Robinson, p. 215

Occleve was a frivolous, tame-spirited creature, tainted with insanity.

Edmund Gosse, 1897, *Short History of Modern English Literature,* p. 35

JOHN LYDGATE

1370?-1451?

One of the most prolific poets known to English literature, and esteemed the greatest of his age. Was born at Lydgate near Newmarket, about 1370. Was a monk of the Benedictine Abbey of Bury St. Edmund's, and became successively sub-deacon, deacon, and priest. Studied in Oxford and traveled in France and Italy. Upon his return established a school in his monastery. Received a pension in 1439. Died about 1451. WORKS: Ritson enumerates two-hundred-fifty-one, without finishing his catalogue. The most important are *Storie of Thebes; Fall of Princes; Troy Book* (first

printed by Pynson in 1513); *The Life of Our Lady* (printed by Caxton in 1484); *The Dance of Death; The Temple of Glas* (printed by Caxton 1479?), ed. Schick (Early English Text Society, 1891). Halliwell edited a selection from the minor poems in 1840.

Charles Wells Moulton, 1900

SEE: *Fall of Princes,* ed. Henry Bergen, 1924-27, 4 v.; *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man,* ed. F. J. Furnivall, 1905; *Troy Book,* ed. Henry Bergen, 1906-35, 4 v.; *Siege of Thebes,* ed. A. Erdmann, 1911-30, 2 v.; *Reson and Sensuallyte,* ed. E. Sieper, 1901-3, 2 v.; *Life Of Our Lady,* ed. R. R. Klinefelter and V. F. Gallagher, 1961; *Minor Poems,* ed. H. N. McCracken, 1911-34; 2 v.; W. F. Schirmer, *John Lydgate,* 1961.

Also Johnn Lydgate
Wryteth after an hyer rate;
It is dyffuse to fynde
The sentence of his mynde,

Yet wryteth he in his kynd,
No man that can amend
Those maters that he hath pende;
Yet some men fynde a faute,
And say he wryteth to haute.

John Skelton, 1508(?), *Phillyp Sparrowe,* v. 804-812

I do not pretend to set him on a level with his master, Chaucer, but he certainly comes the nearest to him of any contemporary writer that I am acquainted with. His choice of expression, and the smoothness of his verse, far surpass both Gower and Occleve. He wanted not art in raising the more tender emotions of the mind, of which I might give several examples. . . . I stop here, not because there are not great beauties in the remainder of this epistle, but because Lydgate, in the three last stanzas of this extract, has touched the very heart-strings of compassion with so masterly a hand, as to merit a place among the greatest poets.

Thomas Gray, 1761(?), *On the Poems of Lydgate, Essays, Works,* vol. I, pp. 397, 399

He is the first of our writers whose style is cloathed with that perspicuity in which the English phraseology appears at this day to an English reader. To enumerate Lydgate's pieces, would be to write the catalogue of a little library. No poet seems to have possessed a greater versatility of talents. He moves with equal ease in every mode of composition. His hymns, and his ballads, have the same degree of merit: and whether his subject be the life of a hermit or a hero, of saint Austin or Guy earl of Warwick, ludicrous or legendary, religious or romantic, a history or an allegory, he writes with facility. His transitions were rapid from works of the most

serious and laborious kind to sallies of levity and pieces of popular entertainment. His muse was of universal access; and he was not only a poet of his monastery, but of the world in general. If a disguising was intended by the company of goldsmiths, a mask before his majesty at Eltham, a maygame for the sheriffs and aldermen of London, a mumming before the lord mayor, a procession of pageants from the creation for the festival of Corpus Christi, or a carol for the coronation, Lydgate was then consulted and gave the poetry.

Thomas Warton, 1778-81, *History of English Poetry,* sec. xxi

Voluminous, prosaick, and driveling monk. . . . In truth, and fact, these stupid and fatigueing productions, which by no means deserve the name of poetry, and their stil more stupid and disgusting author, who disgraces the name and patronage of his master Chaucer, are neither worth collecting (unless it be as typographical curiositys, or on account of the beautyful illuminations in some of his presentation-copys), nor even worthy of preservation. . . . How little he profited by the correction, or instructions of his great patron is manifest in almost every part of his elaborate drawlings, in which there are scarcely three lines together of pure and accurate metre.

Joseph Ritson, 1802, *Bibliographia Poetica,* pp. 87, 88

Has been oftener abused than read. As voluminous as Don Lopez de Vega, and often as dull as the worst-natured critics have not been displeased to find him; yet he abounds with passages that are either curious for their relation of manners, or for their true poetical feeling, or for the vigour and harmony of their versification. In this latter quality he is superior to Chaucer, and sometimes approaches him in his higher merit. He has not Chaucer's felicity in selecting, nor his facility or spirit in describing, the characterising traits of the events which he exhibits; but he has sometimes a greater condensation of expression, if not of thought, and in general better rhythm in his versification.

Sharon Turner, 1814-23, *The History of England During the Middle Ages,* vol. V, p. 340

Indeed he seems to have followed the manufacture of rhymes as a sort of trade, furnishing any quantity to order whenever he was called upon. . . . Though excessively diffuse, and possessed of very little strength or originality of imagination, he is a considerably livelier and more expert writer than Occleve. His memory was also abundantly stored with the learning of his age; he had travelled in France and Italy, and was intimately acquainted with the literature of both these countries; and his English makes

perhaps a nearer approach to the modern form of the language than that of any preceding writer.

George L. Craik, 1861, *A Compendious History of English Literature and of the English Language,* vol. I, p. 403

There was apparently no topic upon which he was not ready to express himself at a moment's notice. He produced, in consequence, a good deal of matter which it presumably gratified him to write; though it seems inconceivable that there was ever a state of the human intellect in which gratification could have come to any one from its perusal. In his versification there is no harmony, no regular movement. In his expression, he had gained facility at the expense of felicity. He is one of those noted, or rather notorious, authors whose fame, such as it is, rests not upon their own achievements, but upon the kindness with which others have been induced to look upon their achievements. There is, accordingly, no necessity of reading his works resting upon any one save him who has to make a professional study of English literature. For this unfortunate being the dead past, so far from being able to bury its dead, is not even able to bury its bores.

Thomas R. Lounsbury, 1892, *Studies in Chaucer,* vol. III, p. 25, 27

Lydgate's most agreeable poems are certainly those in which he speaks about himself. In his *Testament* and his *London Lackpenny* he has given us some suggestive glimpses of his life and character; and he will sometimes rest in the midst of his translations, to relieve his weariness by a moment's gossip with the reader. These green oases are so welcome, in the midst of the desert of dulness surrounding them, that the traveller, refreshed by the little spring of garrulous doggerel, is inclined to celebrate it as a fountain of pure poetry. This however is mistaken gratitude.

W. J. Courthope, 1895, *A History of English Poetry,* vol. I, p. 326

SIR THOMAS MALORY

1410?-1471?

Born in early years of the fifteenth century. Son of Warwickshire gentleman. He served in military campaign at Calais (France) under Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, in 1415. A member of Parliament, 1445, as representative of Warwickshire. Imprisoned for his part in the War of the Roses. Spent most of his last twenty years of life in prison after having been found guilty of charges of robbery, insurrection, and two instances of violence upon "Joan, wife of Hugh Smyth of Monks Kirby." Died in prison. Wrote most, if not all, of his works during his imprison-

ment. His *Le Morte Darthur* was printed by Caxton in a folio volume on July, 1485 (only two copies known, one in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, and the other in the John Rylands Library in Manchester); reprinted by Wynkyn de Worde in 1498 (only one copy known); and 1529 (only one copy known). In 1934 W. F. Oakeshott, then librarian of the Fellows' Library of Winchester College, discovered a manuscript of Malory's romances, which led to the publication in 1947 by Clarendon Press of a three-volume edition based on that manuscript. The differences between the Winchester edition and Caxton's *Le Morte Darthur* have led some scholars to question the liberties Caxton took with Malory's manuscript. A great many modern editions have been published in the U.S. and Great Britain; among the most significant are those edited by Thomas Wright, 1856, 1866; H. Osker Sommer, 1889-91; A. W. Pollard, 1900, 1903, 1927; and Eugène Vinaver, 1947, 1954.

SEE: *The Works,* ed. Eugène Vinaver, 1947, rev. 1948, 1954 (one-volume edition); Eugène Vinaver, *Sir Thomas Malory,* 1929; Edmund K. Chambers, *English Literature at the Close of the Middle Ages,* 1945, rev. 1947; J. A. W. Bennett, ed., *Essays on Malory,* 1963; R. M. Lumiansky, *A Critical Study of Le Morte Darthur,* 1964.

Here is the end of the booke of kyng Arthur and of his noble knyghtes of the Rounde Table, that whan they were hole togyders there was ever an C and xl. And here is the ende of the deth of Arthur. I praye you, all jentyl men and jentyl wymmen that redeth this book of Arthur and his knyghtes from the begynnyng to the endyng, praye for me whyle I am on lyve that God sende me good delyveraunce, and whan I am deed, I praye you all praye for my soule; for this book was ended the ix yere of the reynge of kyng Edward the Fourth by Syr Thomas Maleore, knyght, as Jhesu helpe hym for hys grete myght, as he is the servaunt of Jhesu bothe day and nyght.

Sir Thomas Malory, 1485?, *Le Morte Darthur,* bk. xxi, ch. xiii

¶Thus endeth thys noble and Ioyous book entytled le morte Darthur/Notwithstondyng it treateth of the byrth/lyf/and actes of the sayd kynge Arthur/of his noble knyghtes of the rounde table/theyr meruayllous enquestes and aduentures/thachyeuyng of the sangreal/& in thende the dolourous deth & departyng out of thys world of them al/Whiche book was reduced in to englysshe by syr Thomas Malory knyght as afore is sayd/and by me deuyded in to xxi bookes chapytred and enprynted/and fynysshed in thabbey westmestre the last day of Iuyl the yere of our Lord M/CCCC/lxxx/V/¶Caxton me fieri fecit.

William Caxton, 1485, Colophon to First ed. *Le Morte Darthur*

It is as if the book were the production of no one mind, nor even of a score of successive minds, nor even of any one place or time, but were a rolling body of British-Norman legend, a representative bequest into the British air

and the air overhanging the English Channel, from the collective brain and imagination that had tenanted that region through a definite range of vanished centuries.

David Masson, 1859, *British Novelists and their Styles,* p. 51

In nothing has the revival of sound critical taste done better service than in recalling us to the Arthurian Cycle, the dayspring of our glorious literature. The closing books of Malory's Arthur certainly rank, both in conception and in form, with the best poetry of Europe; in quiet pathos and reserved strength they hold their own with the epics of any age. Beside this simple, manly type of the mediæval hero the figures in the Idylls of the King look like the dainty Perseus of Canova placed beside the heroic Theseus of Pheidias.

Frederic Harrison, 1879-86, *The Choice of Books and Other Literary Pieces,* p. 45, note

The very soul of mediæval Christianity breathes out of the story of the Quest of the Graal as told with simple directness by Sir Thomas Malory. The great popularity of the romance of Tristram and King Mark's wife, the fair Isolde, made it impossible that Malory should have thought of omitting that. But in some sense Tristram is to Isolde as Lancelot to Guinevere. The romance of Tristran was an early offshoot from the sequence planned by Walter Map, and a reader of Sir Thomas Malory's *History of Arthur* might get a better impression of the sequence of adventures, as Map had arranged them, by omitting from the first reading those chapters which interweave the tale of Tristram and Isolde. They were inseparable from the Arthur Legend of Sir Thomas Malory's time, but they break the harmony of the first arrangement by burdening one part of it with variations on its motive.

Henry Morley, 1890, *English Writers,* vol. VI, p. 330

Malory's style is characterised by the simplicity and perspicuity of his French originals, and although latinised words are not uncommon, and he connects his sentences with particles like "and," "then," and "so," his best effects are produced by the use of monosyllables. No effort in English prose on so large a scale had been made before him, and he did much to encourage a fluent and pliant English prose style in the century that succeeded him. In the nineteenth century, interest in his work was revived after a long interval. Tennyson's *Idylls of the King,* Mr. William Morris's *Defence of Guinevere,* Mr. Swinburne's *Tristram of Lyoness,* and Mr. Matthew Arnold's *Death of Tristram,* were all suggested by Malory's book.

Sidney Lee, 1893, *Dictionary of National Biography,* vol. XXXV, p. 440

His simple forthright narrative is admirably lucid and effective, and makes amends for an inevitably rambling structure, while his flashes of chivalrous feeling illuminate the plains through which his story wanders. He is a master in the telling use of the Saxon speech, although he translates from the French.

Walter Raleigh, 1894, *The English Novel,* p. 15

Whatever may have influenced Malory, he produced a book which cannot safely be neglected by the student of mediæval life and manners, to say nothing of the reader who is interested in the *Morte Darthur* on purely literary grounds. One can hardly understand the spirit of the Middle Ages without giving much attention to the romances, and one can find no romance in English to compare with the *Morte Darthur.* Even though the life there depicted is neither English nor French, and though the narrative has little or no basis in reality, the picture which the romance presents has just enough resemblance to the real society to be highly suggestive. Of course the picture needs interpretation and modification, yet it presents in a vivid light the ideals of what we somewhat vaguely call chivalry, and is steeped in the spirit of the great feudal society. This spirit it was, we may well believe, that made the book popular in its own time, and this will doubtless win for it favor in centuries to come.

William Edward Mead, 1897, ed. *Selections from Sir Thomas Malory's Morte Darthur,* Introduction, p. xxviii

WILLIAM CAXTON

1422?-1492

Was born in the Weald of Kent, about 1422. The particulars of the life of this great benefactor of his country are scanty. He was apprenticed in 1439 to Robert Large, a wealthy London mercer. At the death of the latter in 1441, he went to Bruges, where in 1462 or 1463 he seems to have been governor of a chartered association of English adventurers trading to foreign parts. In 1471, Caxton entered the service of Margaret, the duchess of Burgundy, formerly an English princess; and apparently towards the end of 1476 he set up his wooden printing-press at the sign of the red pale in the almonry at Westminster. The art of printing he had acquired during his sojourn in Bruges, doubtless from Colard Mansion, a well-known printer of that city; and in 1474 he put through the press the first book printed in the English tongue, the *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye,* a translation of Raoul le Fevre's work. The *Game and Playe of the Chesse* was another af Caxton's earliest publications; but the *Dictes and Notable Wise Sayings of the Philosophers,* published in 1477, is the first book which can with certainty be maintained to have been printed in England. All the eight founts of type from which Caxton printed may be called

black letter. . . . In 1877, the printer and his work were fittingly commemorated by a typographical exhibition in London.

Harry Thurston Peck, ed. 1898, *The International Cyclopædia,* vol. III, p. 583

SEE: William Blades, *The Life and Typography of Caxton,* 1861-63 (revised, abridged 1882); W. J. B. Crotch, *The Prologues and Epilogues of William Caxton,* 1928; Curt F. Buhler, *William Caxton and His Critics: A Critical Reappraisal of Caxton's Contributions to the Enrichment of the English Language,* 1960.

PERSONAL

Mr. Caxton appears to have been a very humble, modest, and virtuous man. He often styles himself a rude and simple person, confesses his ignorance, and humbly beseeches the pardon of his readers, and the patience to correct his works; and expresses himself in other terms so submissive and self-abasing as are very uncommon, and more easily admired than imitated. . . . He was a man of no more learning than, as he ingeniously confessed, he had by his knowledge of the English and French languages, in which he modestly acknowledged, he remembered himself of his rudeness and unperfitness. By the account which he has given of his printed books, it sufficiently appears in how great favour and request he was with the princes and great men of his own time.

John Lewis, 1737, *Life of Mayster Wyllyam Caxton*

There is no extant portrait of England's first printer. That accepted as his by Lord Orford is based on the small defaced vignette in the manuscript of *The Dictes and Sayings* at Lambeth Palace. King Edward the Fourth is represented on his throne, with the young Prince of Wales—to whom Lord Rivers was tutor—standing by his side; there are two kneeling figures, one of which, Lord Rivers, is presenting to the king a copy of his own translation. The other, assumed by Lord Orford to be Caxton, is the portrait of an ecclesiastic, with evident tonsure, and probably represents Haywarde the scribe, who certainly engrossed the copy, and perhaps executed both the illumination and its accompanying rhythmical dedication. The portrait commonly assigned to Caxton, which first appeared in his life by the Rev. Mr. Lewis, of Margate, is like a large percentage of historical portraits—a picture of somebody else, if of anybody in particular. A portrait of Burchiello, an Italian poet, from a small octavo edition of his work on Tuscan poetry, of the date of 1554—wherein it is introduced merely as an illustration of a Florentine with the "capuchin" and "becca," the turban cap with a streamer—was copied by Faithhorn for Sir Hans Sloane as the portrait of Caxton; one more proof that a demand will gen-

erally create a supply. Lewis improved upon his predecessor by adding a thick beard to Burchiello's chin, and otherwise altering his character, and in this form the Italian poet made his appearance upon copper as Caxton.

Bernard Henry Becker, 1878, *Adventurous Lives,* vol. I, p. 286

General

William Caxton . . . was a menial servant, for thirty years together, to Margaret Duchess of Burgundy, sister to our King Edward IV. in Flanders. He afterwards returned into England; where finding, as he says, an imperfect history, begun by one of the monks of St. Albans, says John Pits very unadvisedly, he continued it in English, giving it only the Latin title of Fructus Temporum. How small a portion of this work is owing to this author, has been observed before; but he now usually bears the name of the whole, which begins with the first inhabiting of this island, and ends (the last year of Edward IV.) A.D. 1483. The opportunities he had of being acquainted with the court transactions of his own time, would encourage his readers to hope for great matters from him; but his fancy seems to have led him into an undertaking above his strength.

William Nicolson, 1696-1714, *English Historical Library,* pt. i

In the choice of his authors, that liberal and industrious artist was reduced to comply with the vicious taste of his readers; to gratify the nobles with treatises on heraldry, hawking, and the game of chess, and to amuse the popular credulity with romances of fabulous knights, and legends of more fabulous saints. The father of printing expresses a laudable desire to elucidate the history of his country; but instead of publishing the Latin chronicle of Radulphus Higden, he could only venture on the English version by John de Trevisa; and his complaint of the difficulty of finding materials for his own continuation of that work, sufficiently attests that even the writers, which we now possess, of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, had not yet emerged from the darkness of the cloister. His successors, with less skill and ability, were content to tread in the footsteps of Caxton; almost a century elapsed without producing one original edition of any old English historian.

Edward Gibbon, 1794, *An Address, Miscellaneous Works,* ed. Sheffield, p. 836

Exclusively of the labours attached to the working of his press as a new art, our typographer contrived, though well stricken in years, to translate not fewer than five thousand closely printed folio pages. As a translator, therefore, he ranks among the most laborious, and, I would hope, not the

least successful, of his tribe. The foregoing conclusion is the result of a careful enumeration of all the books translated as well as printed by him; which, (the translated books,) if published in the modern fashion, would extend to nearly twenty-five octavo volumes!

Thomas Frognall Dibdin, 1810-20, *Typographical Antiquities of Great Britain*

As a linguist, Caxton undoubtedly excelled. In his native tongue, notwithstanding his self-depreciation, he seems to have been a master. His writings, and the style of his translations, will bear comparison with Lydgate, with Gower, with Earl Rivers, the Earl of Worcester, and other contemporaneous writers. Many of his readers, indeed, thought him too "ornate" and "over curious" in his diction, and desired him to use more homely terms; but, since others found fault with him for not using polished and courtly phrases, we may fairly presume that he attained the happy medium, "ne over rude, ne over curious," at which he aimed. When excited by a favourite subject, as the "Order of Chivalry," he waxed quite eloquent; and the appeal of Caxton to the knighthood of England has been often quoted as a remarkable specimen of fifteenth-century declamation. With the French tongue he was thoroughly conversant, although he had never been in France; but Bruges was almost French, and in the Court of Burgundy, as well as in that of England, French was the chief medium of conversation. With Flemish he was also well acquainted, as shown by his translation of *Reynart*; indeed, this language, after so long a residence in Bruges, must have become almost his mother-tongue. Caxton's knowledge of Latin has often been denied or underrated; but as governor of the English nation in Bruges, and as ambassador, he must have been able to read the treaties he assisted to conclude, and the correspondence with the king's council. Moreover, he printed books entirely in the Latin tongue, some of which were full of contractions, and could only have been undertaken by one well acquainted with that language. . . . As translator, editor, and author, Caxton has not received his due meed of praise. The works which he undertook at the suggestion of his patrons, as well as those selected by himself, are honestly translated, and, considering the age in which he lived, are well chosen. . . . As to Caxton's industry, it was marvellous; at an age when most men begin to take life easily, he not only embarked in an entirely new trade, but added to the duties of its general supervision and management, which could never have been light, the task of supplying his workmen with copy from his own pen.

William Blades, 1861-97, *The Biography and Typography of William Caxon*, pp. 88, 89, 90

Caxton cannot be said to have creative power or literary invention of his own. But it is a mistake to conceive of him as only a diligent and humble

translator, content to spread abroad the work of others, and without discernment or judgment of his own. His own translations, if we may give the name to his free paraphrase of French books of romance and chivalry, and to his compilations from the tales then floating about Europe, are unambitious and of no great interest in matter. They are filled with the usual tedious moralisings, and show no great power of selection or force of narrative. But they have the essential element of literary power in a style of admirable clearness, in a certain easy and polished grace of language, and in a bold adoption of words of foreign origin which were fitted to enrich the storehouse of English, and to give to our tongue the most valuable quality of facility and variety of expression. It is for this that Caxton deserves not only the praise due to a pioneer in his craft, but also that due to a weighty contributor to the development of our literary style.

Henry Craik, 1893, *English Prose,* vol. I, p. 97

ROBERT HENRYSON

1430?-1506?

A Scottish poet. He wrote *Schoolmaster of Dunfermline, Testament of Cresseid* (a sort of sequel to Chaucer's *Troilus and Cressida*), *Robene and Makyne* (said to be the earliest English pastoral poem), *Fables of Esop* (probably written between 1470 and 1480), etc. The fables include "The Taill of the Uponlandis Mous and the Burges Mous" ("The Country Mouse and the City Mouse"). His collected works were edited by D. Laing (1865).

Benjamin E. Smith, ed., 1894-97, *The Century Cyclopedia of Names,* p. 495

SEE: *Works,* ed. H. Harvey Wood, 1933, repr. 1958; Marshall W. Stearns, *Robert Henryson,* 1949.

Henryson perceived what there was defective in the close of the story of *Troilus and Creseide* as Chaucer has left it. . . . The Scottish was incapable of rising to the refinements, or conceiving the delicacies of the English poet: though it must be admitted that in the single instance of the state of mind, the half-recognition, half-ignorance, attributed to Troilus in his last encounter with Creseide, there is a felicity of conception impossible to be surpassed. In some respects the younger poet has clearly the advantage over the more ancient. There is in his piece abundance of incident, of imagery and of painting without tediousness, with scarcely one of those lagging, impertinent and unmeaning lines with which the production of Chaucer is so frequently degraded.

William Godwin, 1803, *Life of Geoffrey Chaucer,* vol. I, pp. 487, 493

The most beautiful of Henryson's productions is *Robene and Makyne*, the earliest specimen of pastoral poetry in the Scotish language. I consider it as superior in many respects to the similar attempts of Spenser and Browne: it is free from the glaring improprieties which sometimes appear in the pastorals of those distinguished writers, and it exhibits many genuine strokes of poetical delineation. The Shepherd's indifference is indeed too suddenly converted into love; but this is almost the only instance in which the operations of nature are not faithfully represented. The story is skilfully conducted, the sentiments and manners are truly pastoral, and the diction possesses wonderful terseness and suavity.

David Irving, 1861, *History of Scotish Poetry*, ed. Carlyle, p. 224

As a poet who wrote in the language of the people, Henryson held a high place. His style was easy and flowing; and, though he did not show great inventive genius or passion, he had a fine perception of the beauties of external nature, and handled the objects around him with remarkable skill, and often presented vivid and touching descriptions.

John Mackintosh, 1878-92, *The History of Civilisation in Scotland*, vol. I, p. 462

All Henryson's writings are designed as lessons in good life, but he joins in his verse the finish of a scholar to kindly wisdom, twinkling with some sparks of humour in a simple homeliness of speech. He follows his time when he is somewhat over-curious of detail in working out his Fables into moral allegories, but in telling them he is not more prolix than a man should be who speaks to the ear, not to the eye, and seeks to recommend old home truths to the body of the people. If as poet he is schoolmaster, we do not tire over his lessons.

Henry Morley, 1890, *English Writers*, vol. VI, p. 254

He was the first writer of pastoral poetry in these islands. It is no small praise to his *Robene and Makyne* to say that it anticipates *Duncan Gray*—which tells the same tale with the *rôles* of the lovers reversed—by something like four centuries and a half(?). Not that no pastoral poems of this description were written between the two referred to—not that Henryson's poem can compare with Burns's for either melody or dramatic condensation —but there is a freedom and originality of handling in both poems at the same time that the pastoral spirit is maintained, which justifies one in saying that with Henryson, as with Burns, the pastoral lyric was an independent and indigenous growth, rather than the often sickly and always artificial importation which obtained south of the Tweed. . . . It is only because he

wrote so comparatively little that was wholly original that he cannot be ranked along with Dunbar; though even when he imitated others he always added something of his own.

H. Frank Heath, 1894, *Social England,* ed. Traill, vol. II, pp. 516, 518

GAWIN DOUGLAS
1474?-1522

A Scotch divine and poet of some eminence, was the son of Archibald, fifth Earl of Angus, and was born at Brechin in 1474. After receiving a liberal education he entered the church, was made provost of St. Giles's, and eventually obtained the abbacy of Aberbrothick and the bishopric of Dunkeld. Political dissensions induced him to seek refuge in England, where he was liberally treated by Henry VIII, but he fell a victim to the plague at London, in 1522. He wrote *The Palace of Honour* and other works; but his chief performance is a translation of Virgil's *Æneid,* noteworthy as the first translation of a Roman classic into English. It was completed in 1513, but not published till 1553.

William L. R. Cates, ed., 1867, *A Dictionary of General Biography,* p. 305

SEE: *Works,* ed. J. Small, 1874, 4 v.; *Gawin Douglas. Selections,* ed. David F. C. Coldwell, 1964; John Milton Berdan, in *Early Tudor Poetry, 1485-1547,* 1920, repr. 1961.

He died at London, having proceeded so far on his journey to Rome, to the great regret of all those good men who admired his virtues. To splendour of birth, and a handsome and dignified person, he united a mind richly stored with the learning of the age, such as it then existed. His temperance and moderation were very remarkable; and living in turbulent times, and surrounded by factions at bitter enmity with each other, such was the general opinion of his honesty and uprightness of mind, that he possessed a high influence with all parties. He left behind him various monuments of his genius and learning of no common merit, written in his native tongue.

George Buchanan, 1581, *History of Scotland,* b. 14, c. 13

In his prologues before every book [of Virgil], where he hath his liberty, he showeth a natural and ample vein of poesy, so pure, pleasant, and judicious, that I believe there is none that hath written before or since, but cometh short of him. And in my opinion, there is not such a piece to be found as his prologue to the eighth book, beginning *Of drevilling and Dreams,* etc., at least in our language.

David Hume, 1644, *History of the Houses of Douglas and Angus,* p. 220

Nor were his talents less conspicuous than his learning. In all his writings he evinces an excursive fancy, with much of the fervour of genius. His allegorical sketches are efforts of no common ingenuity; but what chiefly renders his works interesting, is the frequent occurrence of those picturesque and characteristic touches which can only be produced by a man capable of accurate observation and original thinking. He exhibits perpetual vestiges of a prolific and even exuberant imagination, and his very faults are those of super-abundance rather than deficiency. In his descriptions, which are often admirable, he occasionally distracts the attention by a multiplicity of objects, nor is he sufficiently careful to represent each new circumstance in a definite and appropriate manner. His style is copious and impetuous, but it cannot be commended for its purity.

David Irving, 1861, *History of Scotish Poetry,* ed. Carlyle, p. 266

The work by which Douglas lives, and deserves to live, is his translation of the *Aeneid.* It is a singular fruit of a barren and unlearned time, and, as a romantic rendering of the *Aeneid,* may still be read with pleasure. The two poets whom Douglas most admired of all the motley crowd who pass through *The Palice of Honour* were Virgil and Chaucer. Each of these masters he calls an *a per se.* He imitated the latter in the manner of his allegorical verse, and he translated the former with complete success. We must not ask the impossible from Douglas,—we must not expect exquisite philological accuracy; but he had the "root of the matter," an intense delight in Virgil's music and in Virgil's narrative, a perfect sympathy with "sweet Dido," and that keen sense of the human life of Greek, Trojan, and Latin, which enabled him in turn to make them live in Scottish rhyme. If he talks of "the nuns of Bacchus," and if his Sibyl admonishes Aeneas to "tell his beads," Douglas is merely using what he thinks the legitimate freedom of the translator.

Andrew Lang, 1880, *English Poets,* ed. Ward, vol. I, p. 161

King Hart, though in the same conventional vein of allegory, exhibits riper powers than Douglas's earlier work. So vivid, indeed, sometimes become the circumstances and characters that the reader forgets the allegory, and catches fire at the story itself. The narrative is full of action, the personifications are natural and real as life, and the plot has strong human interest, while the allegory is original, consistent throughout, and forcible. In all respects this must be reckoned a greater performance than its more famous sister piece. As the study of the growth and decline of an emotion it will, behind its archaic method, bear comparison with some of the best analytical novel-writing of the present day.

George Eyre-Todd, 1892, *Mediæval Scottish Poetry,* p. 232

Went beyond any other poet of the age in his power of rendering a true landscape, in regard to wealth of detail, varied imagery, and singularly spirited execution. This early art, however, has not yet always mastered the sense of proportion or of wholeness: the details of a May scene in the country are here catalogued in words rather than arranged or selected. Hence, and even more from the extreme rudeness or obscurity of the dialect employed, it is difficult to give a fair notion of the poet's great merit.

Francis T. Palgrave, 1896, *Landscape in Poetry,* p. 127

WILLIAM DUNBAR
C. 1460-C. 1520-22?

William Dunbar was born about 1465, and educated at the University of St. Andrews. He entered the Franciscan order of Grey Friars, and travelled in the garb of the order in Scotland, England, and France. In 1500 he received a pension from the king, James IV of Scotland. He is known to have survived the year 1517, and must have died about 1520, or later. His chief poems are *The Golden Terge* (Targe, or Shield), *The Thistle and the Rose,* and the *Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins.* . . . The only complete edition of Dunbar's works is that entitled *The Poems of William Dunbar, now first collected, with Notes, and a Memoir of his Life, by David Laing;* 2 vols. 8vo., Edinburgh, 1834. *The Thistle and the Rose* is found in the Bannatyne MS. in the Advocate's Library at Edinburgh.

Walter W. Skeat, 1871, *Specimens of English Literature,* 1394-1579

SEE: *Poems,* ed. W. Mackay Mackenzie, 1932; *Poems,* ed. James Kinsley, 1958; J. W. Baxter, *William Dunbar,* 1952.

The imagination of Dunbar is not less suited to satirical than to sublime allegory: and that he is the first poet who has appeared with any degree of spirit in this way of writing since Pierce Plowman.

Thomas Warton, 1778-81, *History of English Poetry,* sec. xxx

In the poetry of Dunbar, we recognise the emanations of a mind adequate to splendid and varied exertion—a mind equally capable of soaring into the higher regions of fiction, and of descending into the humble walk of the familiar and ludicrous. He was endowed with a vigorous and well-regulated imagination, and to it was superadded that conformation of the intellectual faculties which constitutes the quality of good sense. In his allegorical poems we discover originality and even sublimity of invention, while those

of a satirical kind present us with striking images of real life and manners. As a descriptive poet he has received superlative praise. In the mechanism of poetry he evinces a wonderful degree of skill. He has employed a great variety of metres; and his versification, when opposed to that of his most eminent contemporaries, will appear highly ornamental and poetical.

David Irving, 1804, *Lives of the Scottish Poets*

We venture to call him the Dante of Scotland; nay, we question if any English poet has surpassed *The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins through Hell* in its peculiarly Dantesque qualities of severe and purged grandeur, of deep sincerity, and in that air of moral disappointment and sorrow, approaching despair, which distinguished the sad-hearted lover of Beatrice, who might almost have exclaimed, with one yet mightier than he in his misery and more miserable in his might,

"Where'er I am is Hell—myself am Hell."

George Gilfillan, 1860, *Specimens of the Less-Known British Poets*, vol. I, p. 59

His *Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins,* over which the excellent Lord Hailes went into raptures, is wanting in everything but coarseness; and if his invention dance at all, it is like a galley-slave in chains under the lash. It would be well for us if the sins themselves were indeed such wretched bugaboos as he has painted for us. What he means for humor is but the dullest vulgarity; his satire would be Billingsgate if it could, and, failing, becomes a mere offence in the nostrils, for it takes a great deal of salt to keep scurility sweet. Mr. Sibbald, in his *Chronicle of Scottish Poetry,* has admiringly preserved more than enough of it, and seems to find a sort of national savor therein, such as delights his countrymen in a *haggis,* or the German in his *sauerkraut.* The uninitiated foreigner puts his handkerchief to his nose, wonders, and gets out of the way as soon as he civilly can. . . . Dunbar's works were disinterred and edited some thirty years ago by Mr. Laing, and whoso is national enough to like thistles may browse there to his heart's content. I am inclined for other pasture, having long ago satisfied myself by a good deal of dogged reading that every generation is sure of its own share of bores without borrowing from the past.

James Russell Lowell, 1875, *Spenser, Prose Works,* Riverside ed., vol. IV, pp. 269, 271

The special characteristics of Dunbar's genius are variety and force. His volume is a medley in which tenderness and vindictiveness, blistering satire and exuberant fancy meet. His writings are only in a minor degree bound up with the politics of his age, and though they reflect its fashions, they

for the most part appeal to wider human sympathies. He has not wearied us with any very long poem. His inspiration and his personal animus find vent within moderate bounds, but they are constantly springing up at different points and assuming various attitudes. At one time he is a quiet moralist praising the golden mean, at another he is as fierce as Juvenal. Devoid of the subtlety and the dramatic power of Chaucer, his attacks, often coarse, are always direct and sincere. His drawing, like that of the *Ballads,* is in the foreground: there is no chiaroscuro in his pages, no more than in those of his countrymen from Barbour to Burns.

John Nichol, 1880, *English Poets,* ed. Ward, vol. I, p. 149

He was the last great representative of Chaucer's School in Scotland; he stands on the boundary between the world of the Middle Ages and the world of the Renaissance. Like the rich and lovely architecture of his time, Dunbar's poetry is the fine flower of expiring Mediaevalism.

Francis T. Palgrave, 1889, *The Treasury of Sacred Song,* Notes, p. 331

Brilliant beyond any of the poet company he sang, Dunbar still lacked one thing to set him in the ranks of the greatest of the immortals. That place is reserved for those alone who, supreme in other gifts, possess also the key to the fountain of tears. Humour the wildest, wit the keenest, imagination the richest and most glowing, illumine his page; but nowhere, except lightly in "The Lament for the Makaris," and in one little love poem perhaps, does he stir the deeper currents of the heart.

George Eyre-Todd, 1892, *Mediœval Scottish Poetry,* pp. 149, 157

Warton was generous in his appreciation of Dunbar's merits. Scott, in the next generation, proclaimed him to be the greatest of Scottish poets. Campbell compared him with Chaucer. His poems, collected in 1834 by David Laing, allow us to form a cooler estimate of his genius, and show us that Dunbar, while possessing a rich, vigorous, and versatile imagination, wanted the qualities which entitle a man to the front rank in the history of national poetry. Essentially a poet of the court, his talents were always employed in satisfying the momentary tastes of his patrons, so that though his works are of great importance to the antiquary, he rarely touches those notes of human interest which are the passport to the sympathy of the general reader. . . . As a poet he may be described as a jongleur transformed to meet the requirements of a literary age. His poems show a shrewd knowledge of men and manners, and remarkable skill in presenting, under a variety of novel aspects, the somewhat narrow range of themes acceptable to a court. His favourite poetical device was to

carry a single burden or refrain through a number of stanzas, each containing a different turn of thought; but he frequently amused the king and queen with personal satires on the courtiers, or with rapid sketches of scenes in actual life, which have all the character of improvisations.

W. J. Courthope, 1895, *A History of English Poetry*, vol. I, pp. 370, 371

A short, rather rotund figure, a face ruddy and stamped with evidences of the love of good cheer; eyes small, beady, and dark, twinkling at times with an ever-present sense of the humorous side of life, then anon blazing with a fierce, contemptuous scorn of meanness, hypocrisy, and injustice; a tongue as mellifluous in speech as his to whom was given the title "Golden Mouth," yet betimes capable of a sardonic sarcasm that burned like an acid where it lighted,—such is the portrait that has come down to us from various sources of that almighty genius, who, though, alas! all too little known among us of these latter days, has yet been adjudged by many of our most competent English critics to be the peer, if not in a few qualities the superior, of Chaucer and Spenser.

Oliphant Smeaton, 1898, *William Dunbar, Famous Scots Series*, p. 9

JOHN SKELTON

C. 1460-1529?

Born about 1460: died probably in 1529. An English scholar and poet. He was a protégé of Henry VII, a noted scholar, and the tutor of Henry VIII. He took holy orders in 1498, and for 25 years was rector of Diss in Norfolk: he was suspended from this office for marrying, but was not deprived. He wrote *The Bowge of Court, The Boke of Phyllyp Sparrow, Magnificence, The Tunning of Elinor Rummyng, The Garland of Laurel, Colin Clout,* a satire on the clergy, and *Why come ye not to Court?* a satire on Wolsey, etc. His rough wit and eccentric character made him the hero of a book of "merye" tales.

Benjamin E. Smith, ed., 1894-97, *The Century Cyclopedia of Names*, p. 937

See: *Poetical Works,* ed. Alexander Dyce, 1843, 2 v.; *Magnyfycence,* ed. R. L. Ramsay, 1908; *The Bibliotheca Historica of Diodorus Siculus,* tr. John Skelton, ed. F. M. Salter and H. L. R. Edwards, 1956-57; H. L. R. Edwards, *Skelton,* 1949; A. R. Heiserman, *Skelton and Satire,* 1961.

I praye Mayster John Skelton, late created Poete laureate in the Universite of oxenforde, to oversee and correcte thys sayd booke. And taddresse and expowne where as shalle be founde faulte to theym that shall require it.

For hym I knowe for suffycyent to expowne and englysshe every dyffyculte that is therein. For he hath late translated the epystles of Tullye and the book of dyodorus syculus, and diverse other workes out of latyn in englysshe, not in rude and olde language, but in polysshed and ornate termes craftely, as he that hath redde vyrgyle, ouyde, tullye, and all the other noble poets and oratours, to me unknowen: And also he hath redde the ix muses and understande theyr musicalle scyences, and to whom of theym eche scyence is appropred. I suppose he hath dronken of Elycon's well.

William Caxton, 1490, *Book of Eneydos,* Preface

By what means could Skelton, that laureat poet, have uttered his mind so well at large, as thorowe his cloke of mery conceytes, as in his *Speake Parrot, Ware the Hawke, The Tunning of Elinor Rumming, Why come ye not to the Court,* &c. Yet what greater sense or better matter can be, than is in this ragged rhyme contayned? Or who would have hearde his fault so playnely told him, if not in such gibyng sorte?

John Grange, 1577, *The Golden Aphroditis*

Being in deede but a rude rayling rimer and all his doings ridiculous: he vsed both short distaunces and short measures, pleasing onely the popular eare.

George Puttenham, 1589, *Arte of English Poesie,* ed. Arber, p. 97

Skelton, the Malancholy foole.

Gabriel Harvey, 1593, *Pierces Supererogation, Works,* ed. Grosart, vol. II, p. 132

Skelton's poems are all low, and bad; there's nothing in them that's worth reading.

Alexander Pope, 1734-36, *Spence's Anecdotes,* ed. Singer, p. 130

It is in vain to apologise for the coarseness, obscenity, and scurrility of Skelton, by saying that his poetry is tinctured with the manners of his age. Skelton would have been a writer without decorum at any period. . . . Skelton's characteristic vein of humour is capricious and grotesque. If his whimsical extravagancies ever move our laughter, at the same time they shock our sensibility. His festive levities are not only vulgar and indelicate, but frequently want truth and propriety. His subjects are often as ridiculous as his metre: but he sometimes debases his matter by his versification. On the whole, his genius seems better suited to low burlesque than to liberal and manly satire. It is supposed by Caxton, that he improved our language;

but he sometimes affects obscurity, and sometimes adopts the most familiar phraseology of the common people.

Thomas Warton, 1778-81, *History of English Poetry,* sec. xxxiii

Jonson was evidently fond of Skelton, and frequently imitates his short titupping style, which is not his best. I know Skelton only by the modern edition of his works, dated 1736. But from this stupid publication I can easily discover that he was no ordinary man. Why Warton and the writers of his school rail at him so vehemently, I know not, he was perhaps the best scholar of his day, and displays, on many occasions, strong powers of description, and a vein of poetry that shines through all the rubbish which ignorance has spread over it. He flew at high game, and therefore occasionally called in the aid of vulgar ribaldry to mask the direct attack of his satire. This was seen centuries ago, and yet we are not instituting a process against him for rudeness and indelicacy!

William Gifford, 1816, *The Works of Ben Jonson,* vol. VIII, p. 74, note

Erasmus must have been a bad judge of English poetry, or must have alluded only to the learning of Skelton, when in one of his letters he pronounces him "Britannicarum literarum lumen et decus." There is certainly a vehemence and vivacity in Skelton, which was worthy of being guided by a better taste; and the objects of his satire bespeak some degree of public spirit. But his eccentricity in attempts at humour is at once vulgar and flippant; and his style is almost a texture of slang phrases, patched with shreds of French and Latin.

Thomas Campbell, 1819, *Essay on English Poetry*

Skelton is to be regarded as one of the fathers of the English drama. His *Enterlude of Vertue* and his *Comedy callyd Achademios* have perished; so perhaps has his *Nigramansir,* but his *Magnyfycence* is still extant. To those who carry their acquaintance with our early play-wrights no farther back than the period of Peele, Greene, and Marlowe, this "goodly interlude" by Skelton will doubtless appear heavy and inartificial; its superiority, however, to the similar efforts of his contemporaries, is, I apprehend, unquestionable.

Alexander Dyce, 1843, ed. *Poetical Works of John Skelton,* vol. I, p. 1

Skelton, especially in his gay and frolicsome mood, is, no doubt, occasionally indelicate, but with none of that deep-seated licentiousness which taints some periods of our literature; and the laureate of those days may fairly be

allowed some indulgence for the manners of his time, when, to judge from the letters of Henry VIII. to Anne Boleyn, there was no very fine sense of propriety even amongst the highest of the land. And as to the gross epithet which Pope has associated with his name, he deserves it far less than Pope's own bosom friend. There is more "beastliness" in a page of Swift than in these two volumes of Skelton.

Walter Hamilton, 1879, *The Poets Laureate of England,* p. 28

Skelton's claims to notice lie not so much in the intrinsic excellence of his work as in the complete originality of his style, in the variety of his powers, in the peculiar character of his satire, and in the ductility of his expression when ductility of expression was unique. . . . In *The Tunnyng of Elinore Rummynge* his powers of pure description and his skill in the lower walks of comedy are seen in their highest perfection. In this sordid and disgusting delineation of humble life he may fairly challenge the supremacy of Swift and Hogarth. But Skelton is, with all his faults, one of the most versatile and one of the most essentially original of all our poets. He touches Swift on one side, and he touches Sackville on the other.

J. Churton Collins, 1880, *The English Poets,* ed. Ward, vol. I, pp. 184, 185

THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE

SIR THOMAS MORE
1478-1535

Born, in London, 7 Feb. 1478. Early education at a school in London. Entered household of Archbishop of Canterbury, 1491. At Canterbury Hall, Oxford, 1492-94. Student of Law at New Inn, 1494; removed to Lincoln's Inn, 1496; called to Bar, 1501; Reader in Law, Furnivall's Inn, 1501. Friendship with Erasmus begun, 1497. . . .

Member of Parliament, 1504. Married (i) Jane Colet, 1505; lived in Bucklersbury. Travelled on Continent, 1508. Wife died, 1511(?); he married (ii) Mrs. Alice Middleton within a month afterwards. Bencher of Lincoln's Inn, 1509; "Reader," 1511 and 1516. Under-Sheriff of London, 1510-19. On Embassy to Flanders, May to Nov. 1515. On Commission of Peace for Hampshire, 1515 and 1528. On Embassy to Calais, autumn of 1516. Master of Requests, and Privy Councillor, 1518. With King at "Field of Cloth of Gold," June 1520. Knighted, and appointed Sub-Treasurer to King, 1521. With Wolsey on Embassy to Calais and Bruges, 1521. Removed to Chelsea, 1523. M.P. (for Middlesex?), 1523. Speaker of House of Commons, April 1523. High Steward of Oxford University, 1524; of Cambridge University, 1525. Chancellor of Duchy of Lancaster, July 1525. On Embassy to Amiens, Aug. 1527; to Cambrai, July 1528. Lord High Chancellor, Oct. 1529 to May 1532. Lived in retirement, 1532-34. Imprisoned in Tower for refusing oath to Act of Succession, 17 April 1534. Indicted of High Treason, 1 July 1535. Beheaded, 6 July 1535. Buried in Church of St.-Peter-in-the-Tower. . . . WORKS: *Utopia* (1516), (earliest English, tr. by R. Robinson, 1551); *Epigrammata,* 1518; *Epistola ad Germanŭ Brixiŭ,* 1520; *Eruditissimi viri G. Rossei* (pseud.) *opus . . . quo refellet . . . Lutheri calumnias,* 1523; *A Dyaloge . . . of the Veneration and worshyp of Ymages,* etc., 1529; *Supplycacyon of Soulys* 1529(?); *The Cõfutacyon of Tyndale's Answere* (to More's *Dyaloge*), 1532; *The Second parte of the Cõfutacyon,* 1533; *The Apologye of Syr Thomas More,* 1533; *The Debellacyon of Salem and Bizance,* 1533; *A Letter impugnynge the erronyouse wrytyng of John Fryth against the blessed Sacrament,* 1533; *The Answere to the fyrste parte of . . . The Souper of the Lorde,* 1534; *The Boke of the fayre Gentylwoman, n. d.* (only one copy known). POSTHUMOUS: *A Dyaloge of Comfort against Tribulation,* 1553; *Workes . . . wrytten . . . in the Englysh tonge,* 1557; *Omnia Latina Opera,* 1565; *Epistola in qua . . . respondet literis Joannis Pomerani,* 1568; *Dissertatio Epistolica de aliquot . . . Theologastrorum ineptiis,* 1625; *Epistola . . . ad Academiam Oxon.,* 1633. He *translated:* Lucian's *Dialogues* (with Erasmus), 1506; F. Pico's *Lyfe of John Picus, Earl of Mirandola* (1510). COLLECTED WORKS: 1629.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 203

SEE: *The English Works of Sir Thomas More,* ed. W. E. Campbell, 1927-31, 2 v.; *Correspondence,* ed. Elizabeth Rogers, 1947; *Selections,* ed. P. S. and H. M. Allen, 1924; William Roper, *The Mirrour of Vertue in Worldly Greatnes; or The Life of Sir Thomas More* (first published 1625), ed. E. V. Hitchcock, 1935; Nicholas Harpsfields, *Life and Death of Sir Thomas Moore, Knight* (written 1557) . . . *with Introduction on the Continuity of English Prose from Alfred to More,* ed. R. W. Chambers, 1932; R. W. Chambers, *Thomas More,* 1935; Leslie Paul, *Sir Thomas More,* 1953; Pearl Hogrefe, *The Sir Thomas More Circle: A Program of Ideas and Their Impact On Secular Drama,* 1959.

PERSONAL

In stature he is not tall, though not remarkably short. His limbs are formed with such perfect symmetry as to leave nothing to be desired. His complexion is white, his face fair rather than pale, and though by no means ruddy, a faint flush of pink appears beneath the whiteness of his skin. His hair is dark brown, or brownish black. The eyes are grayish blue, with some spots, a kind which betokens singular talent, and among the English is considered attractive, whereas Germans generally prefer black. It is said that none are so free from vice. His countenance is in harmony with his character, being always expressive of an amiable joyousness, and even an incipient laughter, and, to speak candidly, it is better framed for gladness than for gravity and dignity, though without any approach to folly or buffoonery. The right shoulder is a little higher than the left, especially when he walks. This is not a defect of birth, but the result of habit, such as we often contract. In the rest of his person there is nothing to offend. His hands are the least refined part of his body. . . . His voice is neither loud nor very weak, but penetrating; not resounding or soft, but that of a clear speaker. Though he delights in every kind of music he has no vocal talents. He speaks with great clearness and perfect articulation, without rapidity or hesitation. He likes a simple dress, using neither silk nor purple nor gold chain, except when it may not be omitted. It is wonderful how negligent he is as regards all the ceremonious forms in which most men make politeness to consist. . . . He seems born and framed for friendship, and is a most faithful and enduring friend. He is easy of access to all; but if he chances to get familiar with one whose vices admit no correction, he manages to loosen and let go the intimacy rather than to break it off suddenly. When he finds any sincere and according to his heart, he so delights in their society and conversation as to place in it the principal charm of life. He abhors games of tennis, dice, cards, and the like, by which most gentlemen kill time. Though he is rather too negligent of his own interests, no one is more diligent in those of his friends.

In a word, if you want a perfect model of friendship, you will find it in no one better than in More.

Desiderius Erasmus, 1519, *Letter to Ulrich von Hutten*

The king's majesty hath raised to the most high dignity of Chancellorship Sir Thomas More, a man of his extraordinary worth and sufficiency well known to himself and the whole realm, for no other cause or earthly respect, but for that he hath plainly perceived all the gifts of nature and grace to be heaped upon him, which either the people could desire or himself wish for, for the discharge of so great an office. For the admirable wisdom, integrity, and innocence, joined with most pleasant facility of wit, that this man is endowed withal, have been sufficiently known to all Englishmen from their youth, and for these many years to the king's majesty himself. . . . He hath perceived no man in his realm to be more wise in deliberating, more sincere in opening to him what he thought, or more eloquent in expressing what he uttered.

Duke of Norfolk, 1529, *Speech at the Installation of More as Chancellor,* Oct. 20th; *Life of More* by Cresacre More, pp. 166, 168

He maintained the same cheerfulness of heart upon the scaffold, which he used to show at his table; and, upon laying his head on the block, gave instances of that good humour with which he had always entertained his friends in the most ordinary occurrences. His death was of a piece with his life. There was nothing in it new, forced, or affected. He did not look upon the severing his head from his body as a circumstance that ought to produce any change in the disposition of his mind; and as he died under a fixed and settled hope of immortality, he thought any unusual degree of sorrow and concern improper on such an occasion, as had nothing in it which could deject or terrify him.

Joseph Addison, 1712, *The Spectator,* April 10th

More, who counteracted, if he did not curtail his own *Utopia,* and whose other writings degrade him for their feebleness, their bigotry, their scurrility, and their persecuting tendency, below the educated men of his day, would have sunk into oblivion, except as a punster, as a worthy pattern of the domestic virtues, and as one who had been fond of literature, and had been famed for it, but who, in its most important department, was also its unsparing persecutor; if the oppressive violence of his death had not imparted that sympathy and sanctity to his memory, which the human

heart liberally bestows on the victims of power, who unite firmness of principle with moral rectitude and intellectual cultivation.

Sharon Turner, 1826, *The History of the Reign of Henry the Eighth,* vol. II, p. 395

Utopia

I toke upon me to tourne, and translate oute of Latine into oure Englishe tonge the frutefull, and profitable boke, which sir Thomas more knight compiled, and made of the new yle *Utopia,* conteining and setting forth ye best state, and fourme of a publique weale: A worke (as it appeareth) written almost fourtie yeres ago by the said sir Thomas More ye authour thereof. . . . Is a work not only for ye matter yat it conteineth fruteful and profitable, but also for ye writers eloquent latine stiele pleasaunt and delectable. Which he yat readeth in latine, as ye authour himself wrote it, perfectly understanding ye same; doubtles he shal take great pleasure, and delite both in ye sweete eloquence of ye writer, and also in ye witte invencion, and fine conveiaunce, or disposition of ye matter: but most of all in the good, and holsome lessons, which be there in great plenty, and aboundance.

Ralph Robinson, 1551, tr. *Utopia,* The Epistle

Among his Latin Books his *Utopia* beareth the bell, containing the *idea* of a compleat Common-wealth in an imaginary Island (but pretended to be lately discovered in America); and that so lively counterfeited, that many, at the reading thereof, mistook it for a real truth; insomuch that many great learned men, as Budeus, and Johannes Paludanus, upon a fervent zeal, wished that some excellent Divines might be sent thither to preach Christ's Gospel; yea, there were here amongst us at home sundry good men and learned Divines very desirous to undertake the Voyage, to bring the people to the faith of Christ, whose manners they did so well like.

Thomas Fuller, 1662, *Worthies of England,* ed. Nichols, vol. II, p. 69

More's controversial writings, on which he bestowed most pains and counted most confidently for future fame, have long fallen into utter oblivion, the very titles of most of them having perished. But the composition to which he attached no importance, which, as a *jeu-d'esprit,* occupied a few of his idle hours when retired from the bar,—and which he was with great difficulty prevailed upon to publish,—would of itself have made his name immortal. Since the time of Plato, there had been no

composition given to the world which, for imagination, for philosophical discrimination, for a familiarity with the principles of government, for a knowledge of the springs of human action, for a keen observation of men and manners, and for felicity of expression, could be compared to the *Utopia.*

Lord John Campbell, 1845-56, *Life of Sir Thomas More; Lives of the Lord Chancellors, etc.*, vol. II, p. 72

By a strange fate, not a single copy of this work, in any language whatsoever, was printed in England in More's lifetime: or indeed prior to these English versions of Ralph Robinson. Yet—despite its original Latin garb —the work is essentially English, and will ever reckon among the treasures of our literature.

Edward Arber, 1869, ed. *More's Utopia, English Reprints,* Introduction, p. 3

The wit and humour of More is that of the thoughtful observant Englishman, not breaking out into peals of laughter, but so quiet, sedate, and serious as to demand on the part of the reader something of the same habit of quiet thought and observation, to be fully perceived and enjoyed. More hovers so perpetually on the confines of jest and earnest, passes so naturally from one to the other, that the reader is in constant suspense whether his jest be serious, or his seriousness a jest. The book is wonderfully Englishlike; wonderfully like that balancing habit of mind which trembles on the verge of right and wrong, sometimes struggling on in happier times to clearer vision, sometimes, like More, shutting its eyes and relapsing into older impressions unable to endure suspense any longer.

John Sherren Brewer, 1884, *The Reign of Henry VIII,* ed. Gairdner, vol. I, p. 288

At the time of the Renaissance, Sir Thomas More, the wittiest Englishman of his day, whose English style was admirable and who moreover loved the language of his native land, wishing to publish a romance of social satire, the *Utopia,* wrote it in Latin. It is one of the oldest examples in modern literature of that species of book which includes at a later date the story of Gargantua and Pantagruel, Bacon's *New Atlantis,* Cyrano de Bergerac's *Etats et empires de la lune et du soleil,* Fenelon's *Telémaque, Gulliver's Travels,* Voltaire's tales, &c. More's use of Latin is to be the more regretted since his romance exhibits infinite resources of spirit and animation; of all his writings it is the one that best justfies his great reputation for wit and enlightenment. His characters are living men and their

conversation undoubtedly resembles that which delighted him in the society of his friend Erasmus.

J. J. Jusserand, 1890, *The English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare,* p. 50

In some ways doubtless it loses, from the social point of view, if compared with the *Vision of Piers the Plowman.* The *Vision* speaks from the people; the *Utopia* speaks for them. Langland has the impassioned sympathy of a comrade of the poor; More has the disinterested thoughtfulness of the scholar statesman. He has lived at the desk, not at the furrow; he moves among abstractions, and we infer rather than see the laborer in his work. But in compensation we know the author of the later book as we cannot know Langland. Through More's speculations shines a personality full of sweetness and light: humorous and worldly wise, yet pure and tender, swift in stern wrath, yet habitually suave. Langland's enormous book is the monument of an entire civilization, the symphonic expression of a mighty social class. More's short and compact work is the record of individual thought, to be accepted, criticised, discussed, on the same basis as the work of Matthew Arnold or William Morris. It is to all practical intents the book of a modern man. The *Utopia* is the first original story by a known English author. That this earliest English novel should deal with romance, not of a private life, but of society at large, is curious enough; it is even more curious that this first coherent conception of an ideal social state in our literature should be the outcome of the new individualism of the Renaiscence.

Vida D. Scudder, 1898, *Social Ideals in English Letters,* p. 49

Epigrammata

More's *Epigrammata,* though much admired in their day, not only in England, but all over Europe, are now only inspected by the curious, who wish to know how the Latin language was cultivated in the reign of Henry VII. The collection in its present form was printed at Basle from a manuscript supplied by Erasmus, consisting of detached copies made by various friends, without his authority or sanction. His own opinion of their merits is thus given in one of his epistles to Erasmus: "I was never much delghted with my Epigrams, as you are well aware; and if they had not pleased yourself and certain others better than they pleased me, the volume would never have been published."

Lord John Campbell, 1845-56, *Life of Sir Thomas More; Lives of the Lord Chancellors, etc.,* vol. II, p. 70

His English poems are of value only as proving that his bent lay in a different direction. The *Epigrammata* show that he was more at home in Latin elegiacs than in English Skeltonics or rhyme royal. They are rather *vers d'occasion* than epigrams in the modern sense, and often possess the same autobiographical interest which attaches to Swift's occasional pieces. The Latin elegiac couplet, in fact, was as much the proper vehicle for this kind of writing in the first quarter of the sixteenth century as the English heroic couplet afterwards became under Queen Anne. It is here sufficient to notice that More enjoyed in this respect a European reputation second only to that of Erasmus, and that Doctor Johnson even assigns to him the superiority.

H. R. Reichel, 1893, *English Prose*, ed. Craik, vol. I, p. 156

Controversial Writings

His own controversial writings are inflamed by a passion which destroyed his mastery over self, and betrayed him, not only into hasty and violent expression, but into a confusion of thought which is remarkable in a man otherwise so clearheaded. More became a madman the moment he approached the question of religious reform.

George P. Marsh, 1862, *The Origin and History of the English Language, etc.*, p. 502

The *Apology*, although not a work of art, will always have a personal interest to More's admirers. The literary historian, however, would very glady draw a veil over his polemic treatises on religious subjects. They certainly give us the opportunity of admiring More's enormous capacity for work, the fluency of his pen, his great learning and command of the English language; but one cannot help wishing that his capacity for work and his learning had been utilized for other purposes, and his good English applied to other subjects. . . . Few things are more adapted to make us realize the weakness of human nature, and the immense gulf that lies between mere theoretical speculation and the proof we have to offer of the sincerity of our ideas, than this melancholy episode in More's life, when it is compared with the glorious days of his earlier years. Rarely has fate allowed herself to indulge in such trenchant irony as in the metamorphosis by which the author of "Utopia" became the author of the "Confutacyon of Tindale."

Bernhard Ten Brink, 1892, *History of English Literature, (Fourteenth Century to Surrey)*, tr. Schmitz, pp. 183, 184

Life of Richard III

As if it had been the lot of More to open all the paths through the wilds of our old English speech, he is to be considered also as our earliest prose writer, and as the first Englishman who wrote the history of his country in its present language. The historical fragment commands belief by simplicity, and by abstinence from too confident affirmation. It betrays some negligence about minute particulars, which is not displeasing as a symptom of the absence of eagerness to enforce a narrative. The composition has an ease and a rotundity (which gratify the ear without awakening the suspicion of art) of which there was no model in any preceding writer of English prose. In comparing the prose of More with the modern style, we must distinguish the words from the composition. A very small part of his vocabulary has been superannuated; the number of terms which require any explanation is inconsiderable: and in that respect the stability of the language is remarkable. He is, indeed, in his words, more English than the great writers of a century after him, who loaded their native tongue with expressions of Greek or Latin derivation.

Sir James Mackintosh, 1807, "Life of More,"
Miscellaneous Essays

Incomplete as it is, it is a work of the highest value; and this not only as an authority, for in style and method it far surpasses any previous history written in English. . . . Of the literary merit of the history there cannot be the shadow of a doubt. The story is unfolded with admirable clearness, and the progress of events is followed by the reader with intense interest. The characters are drawn with remarkable precision and power, and the speeches are not the rhetorical offspring of the historian's imagination, but might well be the direct utterances of the historical characters themselves. The facts tell their own tale untrammelled by tedious moral commentary. The result is that an extraordinarily vivid picture is presented, the leading features of which are impressed upon the mind with striking and peculiar force. . . . It was he unquestionably who did most to originate the historical sympathy for the Tudor dynasty which has been so striking a feature of English literature. . . . More gave to English history an indelible portrait of Richard Crookback, and in giving it, his clear and incisive style taught a new school of historians to write so that all might read. With More history passed from the monastery into the market-place, and where he began, Holinshed, Cavendish, and Stow followed; and Bacon on his lines gave his masterly portrait of Henry VII.

William Holden Hutton, 1895, *Sir Thomas More,*
pp. 107, 109, 110

SIR THOMAS WYATT
1503-1542

Born, at Allington Castle, Kent, 1503. Matriculate St. John's College, Cambridge, 1515; B.A., 1518; M.A., 1520. Married Hon. Elizabeth Brooke, 1520(?). In favour at Court of Henry VIII. Clerk of King's Jewels, Oct. 1524 to May 1531. On embassy to France, 1526. Marshal of Calais Castle, 1529-30. Commissioner of Peace for Essex, 1532. Imprisoned in Tower at time of Anne Boleyn's trial, spring of 1536; released soon afterwards. Knighted, 1537(?). Ambassador in Spain, June 1537 to June 1539. On embassy in France and Holland, Nov. 1539 to May 1540. Imprisoned in Tower on charge of high treason, 1541; tried and acquitted, June 1541. Grant of land from King, July 1541. High Steward of Manor of Maidstone, 1542. Died, at Sherborne, 11 Oct. 1542. Buried in Sherborne Church. WORKS: Poems in the Earl of Surrey's *Songs and Sonnets,* 1567; *Poetical Works,* ed. by R. Bell, 1854; ed. by G. Gilfillan, 1858.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 305

SEE: *Collected Poems,* ed. Kenneth Muir, 1949; E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Poetry of Wyatt: A Selection and a Study,* 1929; Kenneth Muir, *Life and Letters of Sir Thomas Wyatt,* 1963.

PERSONAL

A visage stern, and mild; where both did grow
Vice to contemn, in virtue to rejoice:
Amid great storms, whom grace assured so,
To live upright, and smile at fortune's choice.
A hand, that taught what might be said in rhyme;
That reft Chaucer the glory of his wit.
A mark, the which (unperfected for time)
Some may approach, but never none shall hit.

Earl of Surrey, 1542, *On the Death of Sir Thomas Wyatt*

He possessed almost all the qualifications which go to constitute a consummate courtier. He had a noble appearance, a form where, according to Surrey, "force and beauty met," a face of perfect symmetry, eyes of dazzling lustre, a mouth of singular sweetness, and a carriage distinguished alike by dignity and ease—the dignity of the oak and the yielding grace of the willow. His accomplishments, too, were extensive, and yet hung elegantly about him, waving to his outline freely like the toga—not sternly girded around him like the tunic. He spoke French, Italian, and Spanish, like English, besides being thoroughly acquainted with the classical languages.

George Gilfillan, 1858, ed., *The Poetical Works of Sir Thomas Wyatt,* p. vii

Wyatt was considered the greatest wit of his time, yet, in an age of gross indelicacy, was never known to utter an improper jest or word. He had a horror of joking on serious subjects. . . . As he advanced to middle life, as a man after thirty was in those days considered to be, he respectfully declined entering into the amusements in which the court was necessarily engaged. On being urged by Henry to join in a midnight mask, he refused: the King asked his reason. "Sir," he said, "he who would be thought a wise man in the daytime, must not play the fool at night." . . . But whilst naturally gay, full of spirits, and fond of society, Wyatt had a holy, heavenly frame of mind, combined with purity and elevation of thought.

Katherine Thomson, 1861, *Celebrated Friendships,* vol. I, pp. 80, 81

General

In the latter end of the same kings raigne sprong vp a new company of courtly makers of whom Sir *Thomas Wyat* th' elder and *Henry* Earle of Surrey were the two chieftaines, who hauing trauailed into Italie, and there tasted the sweete and stately measures and stile of the Italian Poesie as nouices newly crept out of the schooles of *Dante Arioste* and *Petrarch,* they greatly polished our rude and homely maner of vulgar Poesie, from that it had bene before, and for that cause may iustly be sayd the first reformers of our English meetre and stile.

George Puttenham, 1589, *The Arte of English Poesie,* ed. Arber, pp. 74, 76

Although sufficiently distinguished from the common versifiers of his age, is confessedly inferior to Surrey in harmony of numbers, perspicuity of expression, and facility of phraseology. Nor is he equal to Surrey in elegance of sentiment, in nature and sensibility. His feelings are disguised by affectation, and obscured by conceit. His declarations of passion are embarrassed by wit and fancy; and his style is not intelligible, in proportion as it is careless and unadorned. His compliments, like the modes of behaviour in that age, are ceremonious and strained. He has too much art as a lover, and too little as a poet. His gallantries are laboured, and his versification negligent. The truth is, his genius was of the moral and didactic species: and his poems abound more in good sense, satire, and observations on life, than in pathos or imagination.

Thomas Warton, 1778-81, *History of English Poetry,* sec. xxxviii

Wyatt had a deeper and more accurate penetration into the characters of men than Surrey had; hence arises the difference in their satires. Surrey,

in his satire against the citizens of London, deals only in reproach; Wyatt, in his, abounds with irony, and those nice touches of ridicule which make us ashamed of our faults, and therefore often silently effect amendment. Surrey's observation of nature was minute; but he directed it towards the works of nature in general, and the movements of the passions, rather than the foibles and characters of men; hence it is that he excels in the description of rural objects, and is always tender and pathetic. In Wyatt's "Complaint" we hear a strain of manly grief which commands attention, and we listen to it with respect for the sake of him that suffers. Surrey's distress is painted in such natural terms that we make it our own, and recognize in his sorrows emotions which we are conscious of having felt ourselves. In point of taste and perception of propiety in composition, Surrey is more accurate and just than Wyatt: he therefore seldom either offends with conceits or wearies with repetition, and when he imitates other poets he is original as well as pleasing. In his numerous translations from Petrarch he is seldom inferior to his master, and he seldom improves upon him. Wyatt is almost always below the Italian, and frequently degrades a good thought by expressing it so that it is hardly recognizable. Had Wyatt attempted a translation of Virgil, as Surrey did, he would have exposed himself to unavoidable failure.

George Frederick Nott, 1815-16, ed. *Surrey and Wyatt's Poems,* vol. II, p. 156

Wyatt and Surrey are said to have been the introducers of the sonnet into English literature, but this credit is due especially to Wyatt, not only as the elder man and earlier writer, but as the one of the two who alone gave accurate models of the structure of that form of poem. . . . Although Surrey's sonnets are in fourteen lines, and closely imitate Petrarch's forms of thought, yet as to their mechanism they are all at fault. Wyatt studied the form of the verse before he imitated, and the true sonnet was introduced into our literature by him alone.

Henry Morley, 1873, *First Sketch of English Literature,* pp. 293, 294

Wyatt and Surrey are usually classed together—*par nobile fratrum*—the Dioscuri of the Dawn. They inaugurated that important period in our litertaure known as the Era of Italian Influence, or that of the Company of Courtly Makers—the period which immediately preceded and ushered in the age of Spenser and Shakespeare. . . . In Surrey we find the first germ of the Bucolic Eclogue. In Wyatt we have our first classical satirist. Of our lyrical poetry they were the founders. . . . It is unfortunately not

possible to decide how far these two poets acted and re-acted on each other. We are however inclined to think that Wyatt was the master-spirit, and that Surrey has been enabled to throw him so completely and so unfairly into the shade, mainly because he had his friend's patterns to work upon. . . . The dignity and gravity which characterise the structure of some of his lyric periods appear to have been caught from the poets of Castile. His general tone is sombre, sententious and serious, and he is too often reflecting when he ought to be feeling. The greater part of his poetry is wasted in describing with weary minuteness transports of slighted and unrequited affection, but his true place is among observant men of the world, scholars and moralists. His versification is often harsh and uncouth, except in some of his lyrics, which are occasionally very musical, and in his Satires, which are uniformly terse and smooth. He is inferior to Surrey in diction, in taste, in originality, and in poetic feeling; but it may be doubted whether the more delicate genius of the younger poet would have been able to achieve so complete a triumph over the mechanism of expression had he not been preceded by his robuster brother.

J. Churton Collins, 1880, *The English Poets*, ed. Ward, pp. 248, 249, 250

Surely it is time Wyatt had a more general recognition as the first, in time at least, of those "courtly makers." . . . Surely it is time he should more generally have some credit for having introduced the sonnet in our literature. Yet, in his otherwise admirable remarks on the sonnet in the recently published edition of Milton's Sonnets, Mr. Mark Pattison, a singularly accomplished scholar, and a most excellent writer and critic, as all the world knows, does not even mention poor Sir Thomas. *Sic vos non vobis.*

John W. Hales, 1883-93, *Folia Litteraria*, pp. 152, 154

Two very marked and contrary features distinguish Wyatt's poetry, the individual energy of his thought, and his persistent imitation of foreign models. . . . His actual poetical achievements are of very unequal merit; he often aims at objects which he ought to have avoided, or at effects to which his resources are unequal; he is most successful when his fiery genius can find out a way for itself untrammelled by the precedents of art. . . . Wyatt's best poems are written in simple metrical forms, which enable him to pour himself forth with a strength and energy rarely equalled in English poetry.

W. J. Courthope, 1897, *A History of English Poetry*, vol. II, pp. 49, 55

SIR THOMAS ELYOT

1490?-1546

Sir Thomas Elyot: author and diplomatist; born in Wiltshire, England, about 1490. The place of his education is not known, but the extent of his learning seems to prove him a university graduate. He held the office of clerk to the western assize from about 1511 to 1519, when he exchanged it for that of clerk of the king's council, a position which he held for six years and a half, as he complained, without compensation and without thanks. In 1532 he was sent on embassies to the pope and to the emperor, and while on the latter mission received instructions to cause the arrest of the Reformer Tyndale, but failed in the attempt. Though highly honored by his contemporaries for his learning, Elyot received but slight pecuniary rewards from his patrons for either his literary or official labors, and spent his life in straitened circumstances. Died at Carlton, Cambridgeshire, 1546. Of his works the most noted is *The Boke named the Gouernour* (London, 1531), which is a moral treatise on the way to fit a man for the duties of governing. Among his twelve other books are *Of the Knowledge that maketh a Wise Man* (1533); *Bibliotheca* (1538), the first Latin-English dictionary; *The Image of Governance* (1540); *Preservative against Death* (1545); *Defense for Good Women* (1545).

F. M. Colby, 1897, *Johnson's Universal Cyclopædia,* vol. III, p. 79

SEE: *The Boke Named The Governor,* ed. H. H. S. Croft, 1883, 2 v.; Stanford E. Lehmberg, *Sir Thomas Elyot: Tudor Humanist,* 1960.

He wrote also an excellent Dictionary of Latine and English, if not the first, the best of that kind in that age; and England then abounding with so many learned Clergy-men, I know not which more to wonder at, that they mist, or he hit on so necessary a subject. Let me adde, Bishop Cooper grafted his Dictionary on the stocke of Sir Thomas Eliot.

Thomas Fuller, 1662, *The Worthies of England,* ed. Nichols, vol. I, p. 177

The Governor is one of those treatises, which, at an early period of civilization, when general education is imperfect, becomes useful to mould the manners and to inculcate the morals which should distinguish the courtier and the statesman. Elyot takes his future *Governor* in the arms of his nurse, and places the ideal being amid all the scenes which may exercise the virtues, or the studies which he develops. The work is dedicated to Henry the Eighth. The design, the imaginary personage, the author, and the patron are equally dignified. The style is grave; and it would not be candid in a modern critic to observe, that, in the progress of time, the good sense has become too obvious, and the perpetual illustrations from ancient history too familiar. The erudition in philology of that day has become a

school-boy's learning. They had then no other volumes to recur to, of any authority, but what the ancients had left. . . . *The Boke of the Governor* must now be condemned to the solitary imprisonment of the antiquary's cell, who will pick up many curious circumstances relative to the manners of the age,—always an amusing subject of speculation, when we contemplate on the gradations of social life.

Isaac Disraeli, 1841, "The Difficulties Experienced by a Primitive Author," *Amenities of Literature*

Sir Thomas Elyot's place in English prose seems to fall, in other respects than mere chronological order, between Sir Thomas More and Roger Ascham. In the English that he wrote, he is somewhat less anarchic than the former, and less modern than the latter. If Elyot is less cumbrous than More, he never attains the vivacity of Ascham. Charm of style was hardly as yet a gift to which English prose had attained. Elyot has many virtues—clearness and precision among them—but if he seldom falls below a certain level, he as seldom rises above it.

Alfred Ainger, 1893, *English Prose*, ed. Craik, vol. I, p. 191

Elyot's literary work, although it exhibits no striking originality, illustrates the wide culture and erudition of Henry VIII's Court. Political philosophy and the theory of education chiefly interested him. His views were borrowed from the foreign writers of the Renaissance. Erasmus's influence is plainly discernable. Pico della Mirandola, Francesco Patrizi the elder, and other less-known Italian authors were familiar to him. His intimate friends included Sir Thomas More and Roger Ascham. As a Greek scholar who first translated part of Isocrates into English, and as an early student of both Greek and Latin patristic literature, he well deserves to be remembered. That he should have written all his books in his native language gives him a high place among the pioneers of English prose literature. His style is clear, although its literary flavour is thin. His fame as a translator lived through Elizabeth's reign.

Sidney Lee, 1889, *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. XVII, p. 348

EARL OF SURREY (HENRY HOWARD)
1516?-1547

Born about 1517: beheaded on Tower Hill, London, Jan. 21, 1547. . . . He received an unusually good education, and from 1530-32 lived at Windsor with the young Duke of Richmond, the natural son of Henry

VIII, accompanying the king to France in 1532. He remained at the French court for about a year. In 1541 he was installed Knight of the Garter, and in 1543 joined the English forces at Landrecies with special recommendations from Henry VIII to Charles V, and a little later was appointed cup-bearer to the king. He was present at the surrender of Boulogne, of which he was made governor in 1545, but was recalled to England the next year. Henry VIII was ill, and, when his death was near, Surrey's father, the Duke of Norfolk, who was premier duke, was suspected of aiming at the throne. A month before the king's death both were arrested, and the Duke of Norfolk, as peer of the realm, was tried by his peers. The Earl of Surrey, however, who had only a courtesy title, was tried by a jury picked for the occasion, who found that he "falsely, maliciously, and treacherously set up and bore the arms of Edward the Confessor, then used by the Prince of Wales, mixed up and joined with his own proper arms." He had borne these arms without question in the presence of the king, as the Howards before him had done since their grant by Richard II. He was tried for high treason and beheaded. His poems were first printed as *Songs and Sonetes* in *Tottel's Miscellany* in 1557, with those of Sir Thomas Wyatt. He was the first English writer of blank verse, translating the second and fourth books of the Æneid into this form, and with Wyatt he introduced the sonnet into English literature.

Benjamin E. Smith, ed. 1894-97, *The Century Cyclopedia of Names,* p. 515

SEE: *Poems,* ed. F. M. Padelford, 1920; *Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey: Poems,* ed. Emrys Jones, 1964; John Milton Berdan, in *Early Tudor Poetry, 1485-1547,* 1920, repr. 1961; Florence H. Ridley, *The Aeneid of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey,* 1963.

PERSONAL

To his father's hereditary sentiments Lord Surrey added a more than hereditary scorn of the "new men" whom the change of times was bringing like the scum to the surface of the state, and an ambition which no portion of his father's prudence taught him to restrain. With brilliant genius, with reckless courage, with a pride which would brook no superior, he united a careless extravagance which had crippled him with debt, and a looseness of habit which had brought him unfavourably under the notice of the government.

James Anthony Froude, 1856-70, *History of England,* vol. IV, p. 466

In his purification of English verse, he did good service by casting out those clumsy Latin words, with which the lines of even Dunbar are heavily clogged. The poems of Petrarch ring the changes in exquisite music on his love for Laura. So the love-verses of Surrey are filled with the praises of the fair Geraldine, whom Horace Walpole has tried to identify with Lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald, a daughter of the Earl of Kildare. If this be so,

Geraldine was only a girl of thirteen when the poet, already married to Frances Vere for six years, sang of her beauty and her virtue. It is no unlikely thing that Surrey, an instinctive lover of the beautiful, was smitten with a deep admiration of the fresh, young, girlish face of one—

"Standing with reluctant feet,
Where the brook and river meet,
Womanhood and childhood fleet."

Such a feeling could exist—it often has existed—in the poet's breast, free from all mingling of sin, and casting no shadow of reproach upon a husband's loyalty.

William Francis Collier, 1861, *History of English Literature,* p. 92

The Aeneid

Before in age, if not also in noble, courtly, and lustrous English, is that of the Songes and Sonnettes of Henry Howard earl of Surrey, . . . written chiefly by him, and by sir Thomas Wiat, not the dangerous commotioner, but his worthy father. Nevertheless, they who commend those poems and exercises of honourable wit, if they have seen that incomparable earl of Surrey his English translation of Virgil's Eneids, which, for a book or two, he admirably rendreth, almost line for line, will bear me witness that those other were foils and sportives.

Edmund Bolton, 1624, *Hypercritica*

We meet with so many expressions which Surrey has evidently borrowed, with so many lines adopted with hardly any other alteration than that which the difference of the dialect and of the measure made necessary, and so many taken without any alteration at all, that all doubt ceases. It becomes a matter of certainty that Surrey must have read and studied the Scottish translation before he began his own.

George Frederick Nott, 1815-16, "Dissertation on the State of English Poetry" in *Surrey and Wyatt's Poems,* p. cciv

The unrhimed metre of five accents, or as it is generally termed *blank verse,* we certainly owe to Surrey. English verse without rhime was no novelty; and the "cadence" of Chaucer comes full as near to the blank verse of five accents, as the loose rhythms of some of our dramatists; but I have seen no specimen of any definite unrhimed metre of five accents, which can date earlier than Surrey's translation of the fourth Eneid. His verse was certainly considered, at the time, as something new, for the second edition of his translation is entitled, *The foorth boke of Virgil, &c. translated into English, and drawn into a straunge metre by Henry, Earl of*

Surrey. As Surrey was well acquainted with Italy and its literature, and as the Italians were already making efforts to banish rhyme from their poetry, it is possible he may have taken the hint from them; but, in fact, the subject of unrhymed verse had for some time fixed the attention of *scholars*, very generally throughout Europe.

Edwin Guest, 1838, *A History of English Rhythms*, vol. II, p. 239

There are passages of excellence in the work, and very rarely does a verse quite fail. But, as might be expected, it is somewhat stiff, and, as it were, stunted in sound; partly from the fact that the lines are too much divided, where *distinction* would have been sufficient. It would have been strange, indeed, if he had at once made a free use of a rhythm which every boy-poet now thinks he can do what he pleases with, but of which only a few ever learn the real scope and capabilities. Besides, the difficulty was increased by the fact that the nearest approach to it in measure was the heroic couplet, so well known in our language, although scarce one who has used it has come up to the variousness of its modelling in the hands of Chaucer, with whose writings Surrey was of course familiar.

George Macdonald, 1864-83, *The Imagination, and Other Essays*, pp. 94, 96

General

His poetry, with fine lines, and here and there passages of considerable power, would not, apart from his rank, his story, and his poetic *position*, preserve his name. It is full of crude conceits and unintelligible tortuosities of thought and rhyme. Much as he sings of love, he is, on the whole, a frigid writer, and has preserved purity at the expense of nature and fervour of passion. He was a star in the poetic horizon when stars were few, and owes it to darkness and to distance rather than to merit that his light still glimmers—it can hardly be said to shine—upon us; and we accept it not as poetry itself, but merely as containing in it the hope and promise of future and far superior song.

George Gilfillan, 1856, ed. *Poetical Works of the Earl of Surrey*, p. 227

The true merit of Surrey is, that, proceeding upon the same system of versification which had been introduced by Chaucer, and which, indeed, had in principle been followed by all the writers after Chaucer, however rudely or imperfectly some of them may have succeeded in the practice of it, he restored to our poetry a correctness, polish, and general spirit of refinement such as it had not known since Chaucer's time, and of which, therefore,

in the language as now spoken, there was no previous example whatever. To this it may be added that he appears to have been the first, at least in this age, who sought to modulate his strains after that elder poetry of Italy, which thenceforward became one of the chief fountainheads of inspiration to that of England throughout the whole space of time over which is shed the golden light of the names of Spenser, of Shakspeare, and of Milton. Surrey's own imagination was neither rich nor soaring; and the highest qualities of his poetry, in addition to the facility and general mechanical perfection of the versification, are delicacy and tenderness. It is altogether a very light and bland Favonian breeze.

George L. Craik, 1861, *A Compendious History of English Literature, and of the English Language,* vol. I, p. 458

The distinctive feature of Surrey's genius is its ductility; its characteristic qualities are grace, vivacity, pathos, picturesqueness. He had the temperament of a true poet, refinement, sensibility, a keen eye for the beauties of nature, a quick and lively imagination, great natural powers of expression. His tone is pure and lofty, and his whole writings breathe that chivalrous spirit which still lingered among the satellites of the eighth Henry. His diction is chaste and perspicuous, and though it bears all the marks of careful elaboration it has no trace of stiffness or pedantry. His verse is so smooth, and at times so delicately musical, that Warton questioned whether in these qualities at least our versification has advanced since Surrey tuned it for the first time. Without the learning of Wyatt, his literary skill is far greater.

J. Churton Collins, 1880, *The English Poets,* ed. Ward, p. 255

GEORGE GASCOIGNE

1539?-1577

Born, at Cardington, Beds., 1530(?). Educated, probably in Westmoreland, and at Trinity College, Cambridge. Took no degree. Entered at Middle Temple, 1547(?). Student of Gray's Inn, 1555. M.P. for Bedford, 1557-59. Married Mrs. Elizabeth Breton, 1566(?). Lived at Walthamstow from about 1566 till death. M.P. for Midhurst, 1572. Unseated on petition. To Holland, March 1572. Served for short time under Prince of Orange. Returned to England, 1575. Devoted himself to literature. Died, at Stamford, Lincolnshire, 7 Oct. 1577. Works: *A Hundred Sundrie Flowres,* unauthorized publication, 1572; authorized version, called *The Posies of George Cascoigne,* 1575; *The Glasse of Government,* 1575; *The Princelye Pleasures at the Courte of Kenelworthe,* 1576; *The Steele Glas,* 1576; *The Droomme of Doomesday,* 1576; *A Delicate Diet,* 1576; *The Spoyle of Antwerp* (anon.; attrib. to Gascoigne), 1577(?). He *edited:* Sir H. Gil-

bert's *Discourse of a new Passage,* etc., 1576; and contrib. commendatory verses to: Holiband's *French Littleton,* 1566; *The Noble Art of Venerie,* 1575; *Cardanus Comfort,* 1576. COLLECTED WORKS: ed. by A. Jeffes, 1587; ed. by W. C. Hazlitt (2 vols.), 1868-70.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 109

SEE: *Complete Works,* ed. J. W. Cunliffe, 1907-10, 2v.; C. T. Prouty, *Gascoigne: Elizabethan Courtier, Soldier and Poet,* 1942.

To write my censure of this booke,
This "Glasse of Steele" unpartially doth shewe,
Abuses all, to such as in it looke,
From prince to poore; from high estate to lowe.
As for the verse, who list like trade to trye,
I feare me much, shall hardly reache so high.

Sir Walter Raleigh, 1576, *Upon Gascoign's Poem, The Steele Glasse*

Who euer my priuate opinion condemneth as faultie, Master *Gascoigne* is not to bee abridged of his deserued esteeme, who first beate the path to that perfection which our best Poets haue aspired too since his departure; whereto he did ascend by comparing the Italian with the English, as *Tullie* did *Græca cum Latinis.*

Thomas Nashe, 1589, *Letter to the Gentlemen Students of both Universities*

Gascoyne's long poem, called the *Fruits of War,* is in the doggerel style of his age; and the general commendations of Chalmers on this poet seem rather hyperbolical. But his minor poems, especially one called "The Arraignment of a Lover," have much spirit and gayety; and we may leave him a respectable place among the Elizabethan versifiers.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe,* pt. ii, ch. v, par. 60

In his writings we do not meet with the chivalric fervour and impassioned sentiment of Surrey and Wyatt, or with the polish and melody of the Spenserian stanza; but Gascoigne, nevertheless, exhibits and represents a large advance both in copiousness and propriety of language, and in his command over, and compliance with, metrical canons, upon those poets who had gone before, excepting, may be, one or two foremost men. Compare him, again, with his contemporaries, with Churchyard, Tubervile, Grimoald, Googe, Whetstone, and observe his unmistakable superiority—his master-

hand in what he does. Gascoigne's works are indisputably valuable, by reason of their personal and autobiographical allusions, their picturesque, vivid and delicate delineations of incidents and feelings, and of their contributions to our philological stores. He stood, as it were, midway between the school of Surrey and the school of Spenser, but nearer to the former; and he deserves to be regarded as one of the earliest of our strictly *vernacular* writers. He has left to us the second blank-verse Tragedy, the earliest regular Satire, and the earliest dissertation on English rhythms, which our language and literature possess.

William Carew Hazlitt, 1869, ed. *Complete Poems of George Gascoigne,* Preface, vol. I, p. xxvii

His lyrics are occasionally characterised by a certain lightness and grace, which give and will give them a permanent life. Singing of all a lover's moods and experiences—how he passions, laments, complains, recants, is refused, is encouraged—he is never a mere mimic of his Italian masters, or, though somewhat monotonous, wanting in vigour and sincerity. His style is clear and unaffected. The crude taste of his age is often enough apparent; and in this respect his "poor rude lines," if we "compare them with the bettering of the tiems," may sometimes make but no great show; but here too he rises above his fellows, who are often simply grotesque when they mean to be fervent, and are dull when they are not grotesque. He writes in various metres with various facility and skill. Of blank verse his mastery is imperfect; he is like a child learning to walk, whose progress is from chair to chair; he lacks freedom and fluency.

John W. Hales, 1880, *English Poets,* ed. Ward, vol. I, p. 264

With Gascoigne properly closes the discussion not only of the Latin drama, but of the entire *genre* of *theological belles-lettres* of which it was the most conspicuous class, and which the Reformation, comparatively barren elsewhere, produced with prolific energy in the country of its birth. Still in the vigour of manhood when Marlowe and Decker were at school, Calvinist "by grace," but a true "Elizabethan" by nature, Gascoigne is as it were the meeting-point of the literature represented by the *Acolastus* and the *Pammachius,* and that other, not less vast or original, which is represented by *Faustus* and *Fortunatus,* by tales of magicians and witches, of fools and rogues, of Grobians and Owlglasses; a literature not, like the former, essentially composed of Christian materials, and called to life under a Christian inspiration, but a genuine and characteristic creation of the Teutonic genius,—a heap of fantastic and uncouth shapes, permeated and tinged no doubt at every point by Christian emotion, but in fundamental

structure disclosing, unalloyed, the very native stuff of genial, lawless, untameable human nature.

Charles H. Herford, 1886, *Studies in the Literary Relations of England and Germany in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 163

The style of Gascoigne whether in verse or prose is singularly direct and free from the involutions and inversions which mark his latinized contemporaries. He is generally clear, and simple, except where intentionally allegorical or "mystical" as he calls it; remarkably consecutive, though easily diverted from his main purpose. His prose often exhibits greater elegance and grace than his verse, from the fact that the latter is apt to ramble and lose the sense of form and proportion in a profusion of detail. Gascoigne's verse, however, is far from devoid of the quality of music, and displays a general smoothness and evenness of flow from his close regard for the number of syllables, from the correspondence of word and logical or rhetorical accent with the accentual scheme of his verse, from the regularity of his phrasing and from his constant employment of alliteration and its resulting ease of utterance. Gascoigne's diction often rises to dignity and real eloquence, and his figures are frequently original and well chosen. As is to be expected from the prevailing looseness of his structure of sentence, Gascoigne prefers set and fully expounded simile to the flash and inspiration of metaphor, although it cannot be denied that he is often peculiarly happy in the use of the latter.

Felix E. Schelling, 1894, *The Life and Writings of George Gascoigne*, p. 30

Without being a great poet Gascoigne is a representative English writer. He originated no fresh movement in metrical composition, but his active and robust intelligence enabled him to express clearly in verse the thoughts and feelings that were interesting his age. He called himself "Chaucer's boy and Petrarch's journeyman," but he was himself a master of the English language; and his metrical style is singularly free from those learned affectations and conceits to the fascinations of which many of his contemporaries fell easy victims.

W. J. Courthope, 1897, *A History of English Poetry*, vol. II, p. 177

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY
1554-1586

Born at Penshurst, Kent, 30 November 1554. Lay Rector of Whitford, Flintshire, May 1564. Educated at Shrewsbury School, November 1564 to 1568. Matriculated Christ College, Oxford, 1568. Probably took no

degree. Member of Gray's Inn, 1568. To Paris, in suite of Earl of Lincoln, May 1572. Appointed Gentleman of Bedchamber to Charles IX, with title of Baron, August 1572. Studying in Lorraine, and at Strasburg, Heidelberg, Frankfort, and Vienna, September 1572 to autumn 1573; in Italy, October 1573 to July 1574; at Vienna, July 1574 to February 1575; visited Prague and Dresden; returned to London, May 1575. Attached to Court of Queen Elizabeth. On Embassy to Germany, February to June, 1577. His masque, *The Lady of May,* performed before the Queen at Wanstead, May 1578. Friendship with Spenser begun, 1578. President of "The Areopagus," 1578. Being temporarily out of favor at Court, spent some months in retirement at Wilton (seat of his sister, Countess of Pembroke) in 1580; returned to Court, October 1580. Steward to Bishopric of Winchester, 1580. M.P. for Kent, January 1581 to September 1585. With Duke of Anjou in Antwerp, February to March 1582. Knighted, 8 January 1583. General of the Horse, 1583. Grant of land in colony of Virginia, 1583. Married Frances Walsingham, 20 September 1583. Joint Master of Ordnance with Earl of Warwick, July 1585. Governor of Flushing and Rammekins, November 1585. Died at Arnhem, 17 October, 1586. Buried, in St. Paul's Cathedral, 16 February, 1587. WORKS: *The Countesse of Pembroke's Arcadia,* 1590 (later edns., "with sundry new additions of the same author," 1598, etc.); *Syr P. S., his Astrophel and Stella,* 1591; *An Apologie for Poetry,* 1595. POSTHUMOUS: *Correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney and H. Languet,* ed. by S. A. Pears, 1845. *Collected Poems:* ed. by A. B. Grosart (2 vols.), 1873.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 257

SEE: *Complete Works,* ed. Albert Feuillerat, 1912-26, 4 v.; R. W. Zandvoort, *Sidney's Arcadia: a Comparison of the Two Versions,* 1929; *Poems,* ed. William A. Ringler, Jr., 1962; John Buxton, *Sir Philip Sidney and the English Renaissance,* 1954; Frederick S. Boas, *Sir Philip Sidney, Representative Elizabethan,* 1955; Robert L. Montgomery, *Symmetry and Sense: The Poetry of Sir Philip Sidney,* 1961.

PERSONAL

To the Noble and Vertuous Gentleman, most worthy of all titles both of Learning and Chevalrie.

Edmund Spenser, 1579, *Title Page of the Shepheardes Calender*

The return of the young gentleman, your sonne, whose message verie sufficientlie performed, and the relatinge thereof, is no less gratefully received and well liked of Her Majestie, than the honourable opinion he hath left behinde him with all the princes with whomme he had to negotiate, hathe left a most sweet savor and grateful remembraunce of his name in those parts. . . . There hath not been any gentleman, I am sure, these many yeres, that hathe gon through so honourable a charge with as great commendacions as he.

Sir Francis Walsingham, 1586, *Letter to Sir Henry Sidney*

A king gave thee thy name; a kingly mind,—
That God thee gave,—who found it now too dear
For this base world, and hath resumed it near
To sit in skies, and sort with powers divine.

Sir Walter Raleigh(?), 1586, *An Epitaph upon the Right Honourable Sir Philip Sidney*

Gentle *Sir Philip Sidney,* thou knewest what belonged to a Scholler, thou knewest what paines, what toile, what travell, conduct to perfection: wel couldst thou give every Vertue his encouragement, every Art his due, every writer his desert: cause none more vertuous, witty, or learned than thy selfe.

Thomas Nashe, 1592, *Pierce Penilesse*

Of whose Youth I will report no other wonder, but thus: That though I lived with him, and knew him from a child, yet I never knew him other than a man: with such staiedness of mind, lovely, and familiar gravity, as carried grace, and reverence above greater years. His talk ever of knowledge, and his very play tending to enrich his mind; So as even his teachers found something in him to observe, and learn, above that which they had usually read, or taught. Which eminence, by nature, and industry made his worthy Father stile Sir *Philip* in my hearing (though I unseen) *Lumen familiæ suæ.*

Fulke Greville (Lord Brooke), 1628(?)-52, *Life of Sir Philip Sidney,* p. 7

No man seems to me so astonishing an object of temporary admiration as the celebrated friend of the lord Brooke, the famous Sir Philip Sidney. The learned of Europe dedicated their works to him; the republic of Poland thought him at least worthy to be in the nomination for their crown. All the muses of England wept his death. When we, at this distance of time, inquire what prodigious merits excited such admiration, what do we find? Great valour.—But it was an age of heroes.—In full of all other talents, we have a tedious, lamentable, pedantic, pastoral romance, which the patience of a young virgin in love cannot now wade through; and some absurd attempts to fetter English verse in Roman chains; a proof that this applauded author understood little of the genius of his own language. The few of his letters extant are poor matters; one to a steward of his father, an instance of unwarrantable violence. By far the best presumption of his abilities (to us who can judge only by what we see) is a pamphlet published amongst the Sidney papers, being an answer to the famous libel called "Leicester's Commonwealth." It defends his uncle with great spirit. What had been said in derogation to their blood seems to have touched sir Philip most. He died

with the rashness of a volunteer, having lived to write with the *sang-froid* and prolixity of mademoiselle Scuderi.

Horace Walpole, 1758, *A Catalogue of the Royal and Noble Authors of England, Scotland, and Ireland,* ed. Park, vol. II, p. 230

The real difficulty of painting an adequate portrait of Sidney at the present time is that his renown transcends his actual achievement. Neither his poetry nor his prose, nor what is known about his action, quite explains the singular celebrity which he enjoyed in his own life, and the fame which has attended his memory with almost undimmed lustre through three centuries. . . . Few spirits so blameless, few so thoroughly prepared to enter upon new spheres of activity and discipline, have left this earth. The multitudes who knew him personally, those who might have been jealous of him, and those who owed him gratitude, swelled one chorus in praise of his natural goodness, his intellectual strength and moral beauty. We who study his biography, and dwell upon their testimony to his charm, derive from Sidney the noblest lesson bequeathed by Elizabethan to Victorian England.

John Addington Symonds, 1886, *Sir Philip Sidney, (English Men of Letters),* pp. 1, 199

Arcadia

Liue ever sweete Booke; the siluer Image of his gentle witt, and the golden Pillar of his noble courage; and euer notify vnto the worlde, that thy Writer, was the Secretary of Eloquence; the breath of the Muses; the hooneybee of the dayntiest flowers of Witt, and Arte; the Pith of morall, & intellectuall Vertues; the arme of Bellona in the field; the toung of Suada in the chāber; the spirite of Practise in esse; and the Paragon of Excellency in Print.

Gabriel Harvey, 1593, *Pierces Supererogation, Works,* ed. Grosart, vol. II, pp. 100, 101

Those that knew him well will truly confess it to be, both in form and matter, much inferior to that unbounded spirit of his, as the industry and images of other men's works are many times raised above the writers' capacities; and besides acknowledge that however he could not choose but give them aspersions of spirit and learning from the father, yet that they were scribbled rather as pamphlets for the entertainment of time and friends than any account of himself to the world; because, if his purpose had been to leave his memory in books, I am confident, in the right use of logic, philosophy, history and poesie, nay, even in the most ingenious and mechanical arts, he would have showed such tracts of a searching and judicious spirit as the professors of every faculty would have striven no less for him

than the seven cities did to have Homer of their sept; but the truth is, his end was not writing, even while he wrote, nor his knowledge moulded for tables and schools,—but both his wit and understanding bent upon his heart, to make himself and others, not in words or opinion, but in life and action, good and great.

Fulke Greville (Lord Brooke), 1628(?)-52,
Life of Sir Philip Sidney

What can be more unpromising at first sight, than the idea of a young man disguising himself in woman's attire, and passing himself off for a woman among women; and that for a long space of time? Yet Sir Philip has preserved so matchless a decorum, that neither does Pyrocles' manhood suffer any stain for the effeminacy of Zelmane, nor is the respect due to the princesses at all diminished when the deception comes to be known. In the sweetly constituted mind of Sir Philip Sidney, it seems as if no ugly thought or unhandsome meditation could find a harbour. He turned all that he touched into images of honour and virtue.

Charles Lamb, 1808, *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare*

The student of English fiction would fain linger long over the pages which describe the loves of Pamela and Philoclea. For when these pages are laid aside, it is long before he may again meet with the poetry, the manly and womanly sentiment, and the pure yet stirring passion which adorn the romance of Elizabeth's Philip. Three centuries have passed away since the *Arcadia* was written, and we who live at the end of this period not unjustly congratulate ourselves on our superior civilization and refinement. And yet in all this time we have arrived of no higher conception of feminine virtue or chivalrous manhood than is to be found in this sixteenth-century romance, and during one-half of these three hundred years there was to be seen so little trace of such a conception, whether in life or in literature, that the word love seemed to have lost its nobler meaning and to stand for no more than animal desire. There is not in English fiction a more charming picture of feminine modesty than that of Pamela hiding her love for Musidorus.

Bayard Tuckerman, 1882, *A History of English Prose Fiction,* p. 98

The *Arcadia,* in fact, is in some sort a halfway house between the older romances of chivalry and the long-winded "heroic" romances of the seventeenth century. Action and adventure are already giving way to the description of sentiment, or are remaining merely as a frame on which the diverse-coloured flowers of sentiment may be broidered.

Walter Raleigh, 1894, *The English Novel,* p. 60

Astrophel and Stella

In a certain depth and chivalry of feeling—in the rare and noble quality of disinterestedness (to put it in one word),—he has no superior, hardly perhaps an equal, amongst our Poets; and after or beside Shakespeare's *Sonnets,* his *Astrophel and Stella* . . . offers the most intense and powerful picture of the passion of love in the whole range of our poetry.

Francis Turner Palgrave, 1861-92, *Golden Treasury of English Lyrics,* p. 351, note

Penelope Devereux, daughter to his old friend the late Earl of Essex, had once been talked of as his own possible wife. Her father said that he would have been proud of Philip Sidney for a son-in-law. And if so why had the match not taken place? If Sidney had been really devoted to the lady he could have married her. He did not marry her because he did not wish to do so, and in his own day no reasonable being ever supposed that he paid suit to her, except in the way of verse. . . . Philip Sidney was an old friend of her father's, and he gave her the place of honour in his sonnet-writing, wherein she was to be Stella ("the Star"), he Astrophel ("the Lover of the Star"); and certainly, as all the court knew, and as the forms of such ingenious love-poetry implied, so far as love in the material sense was concerned, with as much distance between them as if she had shone upon him from above the clouds. Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* sonnets were being written at the time when he was about to marry Fanny Walsingham; and in those earnest Elizabethan days, at the fitfully strict court of Elizabeth, since the character of such poetical love-passions was then understood, they brought upon Sidney's credit not a breath of censure. As for Lady Rich, she gave herself to Sir Christopher Blount, who became Lord Mountjoy in 1600, and after divorce from her husband she married him. But that was a real passion, and what each felt in it was not told for the amusement of the public.

Henry Morley, 1873, *First Sketch of English Literature,* pp. 421, 422

As a series of sonnets the *Astrophel and Stella* poems are second only to Shakespeare's; as a series of love-poems they are perhaps unsurpassed. Other writers are sweeter, more sonorous; no other love-poet of the time is so real. The poems to Stella are steeped throughout in a certain keen and pungent individuality which leaves a haunting impression behind it. They represent, not a mere isolated mood, whether half-real like Daniel's passion for Delia, or wholly artificial like the mood of Thomas Watson's *Passions,* but a whole passage in a genuine life. . . . Not that *Astrophel and Stella* is without its make-believes. It has its "conceits," its pieces of pure word-play,

in the common Elizabethan manner. No writer in the full tide of literary fashion like Sidney could afford to neglect these. But it would be scarcely fanciful to say that even in the most clearly marked of what one may call his conceited sonnets, the true Sidneian note to a reader who has learnt to catch it is almost always discernible, a note of youth and eagerness easily felt but hard to be described.

Mary A. Ward, 1880, *English Poets,* ed. Ward, vol. I, p. 344

An Apology for Poetrie

I have been blamed for not mentioning sir Philip's *Defence of Poetry,* which some think his best work. I had indeed forgot it when I wrote this article; a proof that I at least did not think it sufficient foundation for so high a character as he acquired. This was all my criticism pretended to say, that I could not conceive how a man, who in some respects had written dully and weakly, and who, at most, was far inferior to our best authors, had obtained such immense reputation. Let his merits and his fame be weighed together, and then let it be determined whether the world has overvalued, or I undervalued, sir Philip Sidney.

Horace Walpole, 1759, *A Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors of England, Scotland, and Ireland,* ed. Park, 2d ed., vol. II, p. 232, note

Sir Philip Sidney is said to have miscarried in his essays; but his miscarriage was no more than that of failing in an attempt to introduce a new fashion. The failure was not owing to any defect or imperfection in the scheme, but to the want of taste, to the irresolution and ignorance of the public.

Oliver Goldsmith, 1773, *Essays,* xviii

From its historical position Sidney's *Defense of Poesy* is an important work in the development of English criticism. It is one of those inquiries into the nature of poetry that have appealed to philosophical curiosity from classical times down to our own, and that are interesting and suggestive, even if not of the most valuable order. Sidney's work is especially noteworthy as a landmark in the evolution of English prose, and as an indication of the classical spirit of the circle to which he belonged. For he writes more as a student than as an alert contemporary of the men of 1580; he was scholastically blind to the signs of the times. Fortunately Marlowe and Shakspere did not take the essay as a literary guide. Yet for a professed classicist, Sidney is not narrow, as his love for English ballads indicates, and his pure and ideal spirit is shown in the serious ethical conception of poetry that marks his entire work.

Edward T. McLaughlin, 1893, *Literary Criticism for Students,* p. 1

General

Our English Petrarch.

Sir John Harrington, 1591, *Translation of Ariosto,*
Notes on Book xvi, p. 126

Though we cannot admit for a moment that the poetry of Sidney is debased by the vile alloy of licentiousness and pruriency, we are not blind to many other vices with which it may most justly be charged. Our author was styled, by Raleigh, the English Petrarch; and without doubt he derived many of his faults as well as excellencies from the bard of Arezzo, whom he frequently imitated both in his manner and in his exaggerated turn of expression. It was from this foreign prototype that he was probably smitten with the love of antithesis and conceit, and the other fashionable absurdities in which our best writers of sonnets then abounded.

William Gray, 1829, *Life of Sidney,* Boston ed., p. 36

There is hardly a character in history upon which the imagination can dwell with more unalloyed delight. Not in romantic fiction was there ever created a more attractive incarnation of martial valour, poetic genius, and purity of heart.

John Lothrop Motley, 1860, *History of the United Netherlands,*
vol. I, p. 357

The better of his pastoral poems in the *Arcadia* are, in my judgment, more simple, natural, and, above all, more pathetic than those of Spenser, who sometimes strains the shepherd's pipe with a blast that would better suit the trumpet. Sidney had the good sense to feel that it was unsophisticated sentiment rather than rusticity of phrase that befitted such themes. He recognized the distinction between simplicity and vulgarity, which Wordsworth was so long in finding out, and seems to have divined the fact that there is but one kind of English that is always appropriate and never obsolete, namely, the very best. With the single exception of Thomas Campion, his experiments in adapting classical metres to English verse are more successful than those of his contemporaries. Some of his elegiacs are not ungrateful to the ear, and it can hardly be doubted that Coleridge borrowed from his eclogue of Strephon and Klaius the pleasing movement of his own *Catullian Hendecasyllabics.*

James Russell Lowell, 1875-90, *Spenser, Prose Works,*
Riverside ed., vol. IV, p. 276

Subtle, delicate, refined, with a keen and curious wit, a rare faculty of verse, a singular capacity of expression, an active but not always a true sense of form, he wrote for the few, and (it may be) the few will always love him.

But his intellectual life, intense though it were, was lived among shadows and abstractions. He thought deeply, but he neither looked widely nor listened intently, and when all is said he remains no more than a brilliant amorist, too super-subtle for complete sincerity, whose fluency and sweetness have not improved with years.

William Ernest Henley, 1890, *Views and Reviews*, p. 105

ROBERT GREENE
1558-1592

Novelist and dramatist (born 1560, died 1592). A full catalogue of this writer's Works may be found in Lowndes' *Bibliographer's Manual*. The following are the most important: Romances—*Pandosto, the Triumph of Time: or, the History of Doraustus and Faunia* (1588), *The Historie of Arbasto, King of Denmark* (1617); *A Pair of Turtle Doves; or, the Tragicall History of Bellora and Fidelio* (1606); *Menaphon* (1587). Autobiography—*Greene's Never too Late* (1590); *Greene's Groats-worth of Wit, bought with a Million of Repentance* (1592); *Greene's Vision* (1592); *The Repentance of Robert Greene* (1592); *Farewell to Folly* (1591). Plays—*The Honorable Historie of Frier Bacon and Frier Bongay* (1594); *The Historie of Orlando Furioso* (1594); *The Comical Historie of Alphonsus, King of Arragon; A Looking-Glass for London and England* (with Lodge); *The Scottish Historie of James IV* (1598); *Mammilia* (1593). Miscellaneous—*The Myrour of Modestie* (1584); *Morando* (1584); *Euphues, his Censure to Philatus* (1587); *Perimedes the Blacksmith* (1588); *Alcida* (1588); *The Spanish Masquerado* (1589); and numerous pamphlets exposing the sins and follies of town life.

W. Davenport Adams, 1877, *Dictionary of English Literature*, p. 286

SEE: *Life and Complete Works*, ed. A. B. Grosart, 1881-86, 15v.; *Poems and Plays*, ed. J. Churton Collins, 1905, 2v.

PERSONAL

I was altogether vnacquainted with the man, & neuer once saluted him by name: but who in London hath not heard of his dissolute, and licentious liuing; his fonde disguisinge of a Master of Arte with ruffianly haire, vnseemely apparell, and more vnseemelye Company; his vaineglorious and Thrasonicall brauinge: his piperly Extemporizing, and Tarletonizing; his apishe counterfeiting of euery ridiculous and absurd toy: his fine coosening of Iuglers, and finer iugling with cooseners: hys villainous cogging and foisting; his monstrous swearinge, and horrible forswearing; his impious profaning of sacred Textes: his other scandalous, and blasphemous ravinge: his riotous and outragious surfeitinge; his continuall shifting of lodginges: his

plausible musteringe, and banquetinge of roysterly acquaintaunce at his first comminge; his beggarly departing in euery hostisses debt; his infamous resorting to the Banckside, Shorditch, Southwarke, and other filthy hauntes: his obscure lurkinge in basest corners: his pawning of his sword, cloake, and what not, when money came short; his impudent pamphleting, phantasticall interluding, and desperate libelling, when other coosening shifts failed.

Gabriel Harvey, 1592, *Four Letters, Works,* ed Grosart, vol. I, p. 168

Hee inherited more vertues than vices: a jolly long red peake, like the spire of a steeple, hee cherisht continually without cutting, whereat a man might hang a Jewell, it was so sharpe and pendant. Why should art answer for the infirmities of manners? Hee had his faultes, and thou thy follyes. Debt and deadly sinne, who is not subject to? With any notorious crime I never knew him tainted.

Thomas Nashe, 1592, *Strange Newes of the Intercepting certaine Letters*

The shamelessness of the man is a sufficient guarantee for the truth of his personal revelations. Vain, and desirous of keeping his name before the public, but without a character to lose, he made a cynical exposure of his vices. These confessions, moreover, are stamped with indubitable signs of earnestness. The accent of remorse is too sincere and strongly marked in them to justify a suspicion of deliberate fiction. . . . Greene deserves almost unmitigated reprobation. He was not only profligate, but bad-hearted, and, as we shall see, he indulged a rancorous animosity upon his death-bed. Yet we may believe that had his youth escaped the contamination of Italian vices, had his abilities been recognised by society, or had a place among men of education and good manners been open to his choice, he might perhaps have prospered.

John Addington Symonds, 1884, *Shakspere's Predecessors in the English Drama,* pp. 544, 545

There were two separate selves in him, and they proved incompatible. One was full of reasonable, sensible, and somewhat *bourgeois* tendencies, highly appreciating honour, respectability, decorum, civic and patriotic virtues; of women liking only those that were pure, of men those that were honest, religious and good citizens. Greene's other self was not, properly speaking, the counterpart of the first, and had no taste for vices as vices, nor for disorder as disorder, but was wholly and solely bent upon *enjoyment,* immediate enjoyment whatever be the sort, the cost, or the consequence. Hence

the glaring discrepancies in Greene's life, his faults, not to say his crimes, his sudden shortlived repentances, his supplications to his friends not to imitate his example, his incapacity to follow steadily one course or the other. His better self kept his writings free from vice, but was powerless to control his conduct.

J. J. Jusserand, 1890, *The English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare,* p. 151

It is easy to condemn the man, impossible not to love him, important to understand him, for his is a typical figure. He may be taken as the very epitome of many writers of the time, wild, profligate Bohemians in their lives, and in their writings earnest and often terrible moralists. Yet it surely is not necessary, with M. Jusserand, to assign to Greene "two separate selves" in order to understand this. Rather, the man who should preach repentance without having felt, as Greene did, all the anguish of self-reproach and self-abasement, all the bitterness of the fruits of his misdoing, is in need of two selves, one for the pulpit, another for the complacent regulation of his private affairs. Greene had but one self, full of impulse, readily kindled to generosity, or carried by sympathy or ridicule into vice, and above all filled with that artistic instinct which compelled him to give expression in poetic or literary form to what he felt and knew.

Walter Raleigh, 1894, *The English Novel,* p. 66

Romances

Robert Greene was a man who possessed all the advantages of education: he was a graduate of both Universities—he was skilled in ancient learning and in modern languages—he had, besides, a prolific imagination, a lively and elegant fancy, and a grace of expression rarely exceeded; yet let any person well acquainted with *The Winter's Tale* read the novel of *Pandosto,* upon which it was founded, and he will be struck at once with the vast pre-eminence of Shakespeare, and with the admirable manner in which he has converted materials supplied by another to his own use. The bare outline of the story (with the exception of Shakespeare's miraculous conclusion) is nearly the same in both; but this is all they have in common, and Shakespeare may be said to have scarcely adopted a single hint for his descriptions, or a line for his dialogue; while in point of passion and sentiment Greene is cold, formal, and artificial: the very opposite of everything in Shakespeare.

John Payne Collier, 1843, *Shakespeare's Library,* Introduction to Greene's *Pandosto,* vol. I, p. i

As a writer he was one amongst the most popular of his day. His little romances of some fifty pages each were the delight of readers for amusement, for half a century. They were the companions of the courtly and the humble,—eagerly perused by the scholar of the University and the apprentice of the City. They reached the extreme range of popularity. In Anthony Wood's time they were "mostly sold on ballad-monger's stalls"; and Sir Thomas Overbury describes his Chambermaid as reading "Greene's works over and over." Some of these tales are full of genius, ill-regulated no doubt, but so pregnant with invention, that Shakspere in the height of his fame did not disdain to avail himself of the stories of his early contemporary.

Charles Knight, 1849, *Studies of Shakspere,* bk. i, ch. v

Dramas

If, as a dramatist, Greene fails to exhibit character with force and discrimination, if he has much both of the fustian and the meanness which are found more or less in all the plays of the period, and if his blank-verse is so monotonous as to pall upon the ear; it must be allowed, on the other hand, that he not unfrequently writes with elegance and spirit, and that in some scenes he makes a near approach to simplicity and nature.

Alexander Dyce, 1831-61, ed. *Dramatic and Poetical Works of Robert Greene,* p. 34

Greene was a prolific and versatile author. Besides dramas, he was a writer of novels and poetical pieces, especially of instructive or moral works, which were occasionally in a semi-poetic and romantic form, and of several pamphlets of a satirical character. In all he displayed no common powers of mind—great sensibility and tenderness of feeling, a quick and lively fancy, a graceful vein of humour and raillery, but without profundity of genius, or deep and solid feelings, without fixed opinions in religion and morals, and above all, without that energy of character which is required to hold with a firm hand the reins of poesy not less than of life. . . . His dramas possess, indeed, form and proportion; they are not without keeping and light nimble movement; but this external regularity of form, this outward advance of the plot, does not compensate for the want of inward unity and organic necessity of the several parts. In perfect agreement with all this, his dramatic characters are, it is true, correctly drawn, and are also lively and graceful, but yet devoid of an inner motive of development provided and existing from the beginning; they are not full and well-finished figures, but, for the most part, as it were, sculptured in half-relief, or like ancient illuminations, in which the figures do not at all stand out from the brilliant ground of gold on which they are emblazoned. They are deficient in intrinsic massiveness and solidity of mind; like Greene himself, their life does not

pass outwards from within, but conversely, and consequently their inmost and real personality is never laid bare, but reality and appearance float alike before us in a broad, loose, and vague indeterminateness. The language is pure, clear, and graceful, but without ebb and flow; proceeding in one broad unbroken line, and not so much the language of mind, feeling, and passion, as of conversation and narrative.

Dr. Hermann Ulrici, 1839, *Shakspeare's Dramatic Art,* pp. 39, 40

Certainly the title of "a vulgar writer" suits no one so well as Greene; for in the works of no other dramatist of his day shall we find so many scenes taken bodily, so to speak, out of English real life, and put into so pure and popular a language, free from all euphuistic admixture and florid classical figurativeness. Exactly half of those plays of Greene's which we still possess are devoted to the representation of the life of the people. For Chettle, who knew all Greene's plays, affirms that the percentage of the popular was considerably greater. Even in Greene's earlier dramatic attempts,—in which he imitated Marlowe's gorgeous manner and Lylly's [*sic*] euphuistic style,—we shall always find two or three scenes of popular life, which are so witty, lively and fresh, that they leave nothing to be desired. But another circumstance contributed not a little to Greene's popularity as a dramatist. His plays, with their fantastical characters and their numerous unexpected adventures, reminded the public of their favourite novels, tales of chivalry, and wonderful romances.

Nicholas Storojenko, 1878, *Robert Greene; His Life and Works; A Critical Investigation,* tr. Hodgetts, ed. Grosart, p. 223

His best plays breathe a thoroughly national spirit, and they are instinct with love of English traditions, English virtues, and English familiar scenes. *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* and *George-a-Greene* set before us pictures of country life as natural and attractive as any in *Love's Labour's Lost* or *The Merry Wives of Windsor.* A pure and fragrant air ripples through their pages, blowing from over homestead, and meadow, and stream. Here too we meet with members of every social class, prince and peasant, earl and shoemaker, philosopher and clown, all mixing in easy familiarity. So it is in the world of Shakspeare, where rank is never the measure of merit, and where the ideal ruler wandering in disguise among his soldiers declares to them that the King is but a man as other men, with like senses and conditions. But Greene in his popular sympathies goes further than Shakspere, who can never be strictly called democratic, and of whose heroes and heroines not one is taken from humble life. The portrait gallery of the greater dramatist, wide and varied as it is, contains no such figures as Margaret of Fresingfield or the Pinner of Wakefield. The village

maid, who is really what she seems, not, like Perdita, a princess in disguise, and who yet may be worthy of an Earl's love; the yeoman, with the sturdy independence of his class united to genuine loyalty and ardour of heart—these are not types over which Shakspere lingers lovingly. For them we are indebted to Greene, who thus takes his place on the long list of our writers headed by Langland, and numbering Burns, Crabbe, and Wordsworth among its foremost names, who have found their truest inspiration in the joys and sorrows of the poor.

Frederick S. Boas, 1896, *Shakspere and his Predecessors,* p. 87

General

Other newes I am advertised of, that a scald triviall lying Pamphlet, called *Greens Groats worth of Wit* is given out to be of my doing. God never have care of my soule, but utterly renounce me, if the least word or syllable in it proceeded from my penne, or if I were any way privie to the writing or printing of it.

Thomas Nashe, 1592, *Pierce Penilesse his Supplication to the Divell*

I must take this fresh opportunity of recalling that, as the converse of Herrick's famous (or infamous) pleading that if his verse was impure his life was chaste, Greene's writings are exceptionally clean. Nor must he be refused the benefit of this in any judicial estimate of him. It is equally harsh and uncritical to say that this confessedly dissolute-living man wrote purely because it paid to do so. It did no such thing. It would have paid, and did pay, to write impurely, and as ministering to the insatiate appetite of readers for garbage. To his undying honour, Robert Greene, equally with James Thomson, left scarce a line that dying he need have wished "to blot." I can't understand the nature of any one who can think hardly of Greene in the light of his ultimate penitence and absolute confession. It is (if the comparison be not over-bold) as though one had taunted David with his sin after the fifty-first Psalm.

Alexander B. Grosart, 1881-86, ed. *Life and Complete Works of Robert Greene,* Editor's Introduction, vol. I, p. xix

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE
1564-1593

Christopher Marlowe, 1564-1593. Born, at Canterbury, Feb.(?) 1564; baptized, 26 Feb. Educated at King's School, Canterbury. Matric. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, 17 March 1581; B.A., 1583; M.A., 1587. Probably settled in London soon afterwards. Warrant for his arrest, on

ground of heretical views expressed in his writings, issued 18 May 1593. Killed, in a tavern quarrel at Deptford, 1 June 1593. WORKS: *Tamburlaine the Great* (anon.), 1590. POSTHUMOUS: *Edward II,* Cassel, 1594 (only one copy known; another edn., London, 1598); *The Tragedy of Dido* (with T. Nash), 1594; *Hero and Leander,* 1598; *The Tragical History of . . . Dr. Faustus,* 1601(?), (earliest copy extant, 1604); *The Massacre at Paris* (1600); *The Famous Tragedy of the Rich Jew of Malta,* 1633; *Lust's Dominion,* 1657; *A Most Excellent Ditty of the Lover's promises to his beloved,* 1650(?). He *translated:* Ovid's *Amores,* 1590(?) and 1598(?); *Lucan's First Booke,* 1600. COLLECTED WORKS: ed. by G. Robinson, 3 vols., 1826; ed. by A. Dyce, 3 vols., 1850; ed. by A. H. Bullen, 3 vols., 1885.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 186

SEE: *The Works and Life of Christopher Marlowe,* ed. R. H. Case, 1930-33, 6 v.; *Complete Plays,* ed. Irving Ribner, 1963; *Marlowe's 'Doctor Faustus,' 1604-1616, Parallel Texts,* ed. W. W. Greg, 1950; *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus. A Conjectural Reconstruction,* by W. W. Greg, 1950; John Bakeless, *Christopher Marlowe,* 1937; Frederick S. Boas, *Christopher Marlowe,* 1940; A. L. Rowse, *Christopher Marlowe,* 1964.

PERSONAL

Christopher Marlow, slain by ffrancis Archer, the 1 of June 1593.

Burial-Register, Parish Church of St. Nicholas, Deptford, 1593

By practice a play-maker and a poet of scurrilitie, who, by giuing too large a swing to his owne wit, and suffering his lust to haue the full reines, . . . denied God and his sonne Christ, and not onely in word blasphemed the Trinitie, but also (as it is credibly reported) wrote bookes against it, affirming our Sauior to be but a deceiuer, and Moses to be but a coniurer and seducer of the people, and the Holy Bible to bee but vaine and idle stories, and all religion but a deuice of policie. But see what a hooke the Lord put in the nostrils of this barking dogge! So it fell out, that, as he purposed to stab one whom he ought a grudge vnto, with his dagger, the other party perceiuing so auoyded the stroke, that withall catching hold of his wrist, hee stabbed his owne dagger into his owne head, in such sort that, notwithstanding all the meanes of surgerie that could bee wrought, hee shortly after died thereof; the manner of his death being so terrible . . . that it was not only a manifeste signe of God's judgement, but also an horrible and fearefull terror to all that beheld him. But herein did the justice of God most noteably appeare, in that hee compelled his owne hand, which had written these blasphemies, to bee the instrument to punish him, and that in his braine which had deuised the same.

Thomas Beard, 1597, *Theatre of God's Judgments*

As Jodelle, a French tragical poet, being an epicure and an atheist, made a pitiful end: so our tragical poet Marlow, for his Epicurism and Atheism, had a tragical death; as you may read of this Marlow more at large, in the Theatre of God's judgments, in the 25th chapter, entreating of Epicures and Atheists. As the poet Lycophron was shot to death by a certain rival of his: so Christopher Marlow was stabbed to death by a baudy Servingman, a rival of his, in his lewd love.

Francis Meres, 1598, *Palladis Tamia*

Not inferior to these was one Christopher Marlow, by profession a playmaker, who as it was reported, about fourteen years ago wrote a book against the Trinitie. But see the effects of God's justice! It so hapned that at Detford, a little village about three miles distant from London, as he meant to stab with his poniard one named Ingram, that had invited him thither to a feast, and was then playing at tables, hee quickly perceiving it, so avoyded the thrust, that with all drawing out his dagger for his defence, hee stabd this Marlowe into the eye, in such sort, his braynes comming out, at the daggers point, hee shortly after dyed. Thus did God, the true executioner of divine justice, work the end of impious atheists.

Sir William Vaughan, 1600, *Golden Grove*

The death of Marlowe was seized upon with avidity by the Puritans, and he was held up as an awful example of the judgment of God. He was a freethinker, an atheist, a blasphemer; there was no known crime that was not imputed to him. As no one man could have been guilty of all the wickedness he was charged with, and as one of his accusers was afterwards hanged at Tyburn, let us charitably render the Scotch verdict—"Not proven." The Devil himself is not as black as he is painted by the theologians.

Richard Henry Stoddard, 1884, ed. *Selections from the Poetical Works of A. C. Swinburne,* Introduction, p. vii

It is certain he had friends among the finest-natured men of his time. Walsingham was his patron; there seems a touch of tenderness in Shakespeare's apostrophe of the "dead shepherd" in *As You Like It*; Nash, who had sometimes been a jealous rival wrote an elegy "on Marlowe's untimely death" which has not survived; an anonymous writer in 1600 speaks lovingly of "kynde Kit Marloe"; Edward Blunt, Marlowe's friend and publisher, writes, in words that have a genuine ring, of "the impression of the man that hath been dear unto us, living an after-life in our memory"; Drayton's well-inspired lines are familiar. . . . There is no alloy of blame in the words of these men, Drayton and Chapman, and they were among the gravest as well as the best-loved of their time. One lingers over the faintest

traces of this personality which must have been so fascinating, for we have no further trustworthy indications of the manner of man that he was in the eyes of those who knew him.

Havelock Ellis, 1887, ed. *Marlowe,* (Mermaid Series), p. xlv

Tamburlaine (1590)

Idiote art-masters that intrude theselues to our eares as the alcumists of eloquence; who (mouted on the stage of arrogance) think to outbraue better pens with the swelling bumbast of a bragging blank verse. Indeed it may be the ingrafted ouerflow of sòme kilcow conceipt, that ouercloieth their imagination with a more than drunken resolution, beeing not extemporall in the inuention of anie other meanes to vent their manhood, commits the digestion of their cholerick incumbrances to the spacious volubilitie of a drumming decasillabon.

Thomas Nashe, 1587, *To the Gentlemen Students of both Universities,* ed. Grosart, p. xx

I keep my old course, to palter vp some thing in Prose, vsing mine òld poesie still, *Omne tulit punctum,* although latelye two Gentlemen Poets, made two mad men of Rome beate out of their paper bucklers: & had it in derision, for that I could not make my verses ilt vpon the stage in tragicall buskins, euerie worde filling the mouth like the faburden of Bo-Bell, daring God out of heauen with that Atheist Tamburlan, or blaspheming with the mad preest of the sonne.

Robert Greene, 1588, *Perimedes The Blacke Smith,* To the Reader

The true artificer will not run away from Nature as he were afraid of her; or depart from life, and the likeness of truth; but speak to the capacity of his hearers. And though his language differs from the vulgar somewhat it will not fly from all humanity, with the Tamer-lanes and Tamer-chams of the late age, which had nothing in them but the scenical strutting, and furious vociferation, to warrant them to the ignorant gapers.

Ben Jonson, 1630-37, *Timber, or, Discoveries,* lxxii

Marlow could not have selected for his purpose a better subject than the life and conquests of Tamburlaine, who rose from the lowest grade of life to the loftiest honours of a throne: instead of the "conceits which clownage kept in pay," he carried the spectators "to the stately tent of war," and took ample room for striking effects and novel situations. He seems, however, to have apprehended that he could not accomplish his great change instantly;

and in order, to a certain extent, to gratify the appetite of the mob, he introduced into his performance scenes of low humour and buffoonery, which are omitted in the printed copies, the publisher informing the reader that he considered them derogatory "to so honourable and stately a history." The reason for their insertion was the same as for the employment of "high astounding terms"—not that they were good, but that they would be applauded; and Marlow himself no more approved of the one than of the other. . . . It is by no means fair, therefore, to examine *Tamburlaine the Great* without bearing this fact in memory:—that it was the first attempt of the kind, and that Marlow made great sacrifices, as a poet, to promote its success. It will at once account for all the fustian and hyperbole by which the production unquestionably is disfigured, but which is sometimes of such a striking character, that we must pronounce even its absurdities the work of a man of fervid and exalted genius.

John Payne Collier, 1831, *History of English Dramatic Poetry*, vol. III, pp. 119, 121

Laugh as we will, in this first of Marlowe's plays there is that incommunicable gift which means almost everything, *style*; a manner perfectly individual, and yet, at its best, free from eccentricity. The "mighty line" of which Jonson spoke, and a pleasure, equal to Milton's, in resounding proper names, meet us in the very first scene; and in not a few passages passion, instead of vociferating, finds its natural expression, and we hear the fully-formed style, which in Marlowe's best writing is, to use his own words,

"Like his desire, lift upward and divine."

"Lift upward" Marlowe's style was at first, and so it remained. It degenerates into violence, but never into softness. If it falters, the cause is not doubt or langour, but haste and want of care.

Andrew Cecil Bradley, 1880, *English Poets*, ed. Ward, vol. I, p. 413

It is difficult to over-estimate the importance of *Tamburlaine* in the history of the English Drama. To appreciate how immensely Marlowe outdistances at one bound all his predecessors, the reader must summon courage to make himself acquainted with such productions as *Gorboduc*, *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, and *Sir Clyomon* and *Sir Clamydes*. He will then perceive how real is Marlowe's claim to be regarded as the father of the English drama. That the play is stuffed with bombast, that exaggeration is carried sometimes to the verge of burlesque, no sensible critic will venture to deny. But the characters, with all their stiffness, have life and movement. The Scythian conqueror, "threatening the world in high astounding terms," is an impressive figure. There is nothing mean or trivial in the invention.

The young poet threw into his work all the energy of his passionate nature. He did not pause to polish his lines, to correct and curtail; but was borne swiftly onward by the wings of his imagination. The absence of chastening restraint is felt throughout; and, indeed, the beauty of some of the most majestic passages is seriously marred by the introduction of a weak or ill-timed verse.

A. H. Bullen, 1884, ed. *Works of Christopher Marlowe,* Introduction, vol. I, p. xviii

Edward II (1594)

In a very different style from mighty *Tamburlaine* is the tragedy of *Edward the Second*. The reluctant pangs of abdicating royalty in Edward furnished hints, which Shakespeare scarcely improved in his *Richard the Second*; and the death-scene of Marlowe's king moves pity and terror beyond any scene ancient or modern with which I am acquainted.

Charles Lamb, 1808, *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare*

He has handled the history of *Edward the Second* in a very artless manner it is true, but with a certain truth and simplicity, so that many scenes do not fail to produce a pathetic effect. His verses are flowing, but without energy; how Ben Jonson could come to use the expression, *Marlow's mighty line,* is more than I can conceive.

Augustus William Schlegel, 1809, *Dramatic Art and Literature,* tr. Black, Lecture XIII

Edward II is, according to the modern standard of composition, Marlowe's best play. It is written with few offences against the common rules, and in a succession of smooth and flowing lines. The poet, however, succeeds less in the voluptuous and effeminate descriptions which he here attempts, than in the more dreadful and violent bursts of passion. *Edward II* is drawn with historic truth, but without much dramatic effect.

William Hazlitt, 1820, *Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth,* Lecture II

Of the murder of the king Charles Lamb has written that it "moves pity and terror beyond any scene, ancient or modern, with which I am acquainted." These may seem strong words when we think of Prometheus chained to the mountain top, or of Lear storm-tossed on the heath, but they are memorable as coming from so clear-eyed a critic. In any case there can be no doubt that the fifth act of Marlowe's tragedy far surpasses the corre-

sponding portion of Shakspere's *Richard II*. This is partly due to a characteristic difference between the dramatists in the handling of their allied themes. Shakspere's aim is to show how Richard's weakness and sentimentality bring about his downfall. The purpose of the play would have been defeated had he awakened a reaction in the unhappy king's favour by a vivid picture of his prison sufferings and death. This, on the contrary, is what Marlowe has done, and so persuasive is his art that our recollection of Edward's sins is almost effaced in the contemplation of his long-drawn agony. Here, as always, Shakspere's moral point of view is loftier than his forerunner's, and *Richard II* moreover breathes a spirit of fervent patriotism absent in the earlier work. But in the variety of its situations, and in closely sustained dramatic interest, *Edward II* has without question the advantage over Shakspere's play.

Frederick S. Boas, 1896, *Shakspere and his Predecessors,* p. 57

Mention is made of *Edward II* in Henslowe's "Diary," and the title-page of the last Quarto (1622) speaks of it as "acted by the Queenes Maiesties Seruants," *i.e.* Queen Anne's Company of actors, to whom had passed the rights of the original performers, Pembroke's Company. Otherwise, nothing, it would seem, is known with regard to its stage-history, and it thus presents a striking contrast to *Faustus* and *The Jew of Malta,* the great popularity of which is attested by contemporary allusions and references, and the comments of later critics like Edward Phillips (in *Theatrum Poetarum,* 1675) and Langbaine (in *Dramatick Poets,* 1691). The fact that most of the prominent characters in *Edward II* excite little sympathy must, one would think, have told somewhat against it. To the student, however, it is a play of surpassing interest, for its intrinsic merits, its just claim to be the first specimen in our language of true historical drama, and its relation to *Richard II*.

A. W. Verity, 1896, ed. Marlowe's *Edward the Second,*
Preface, p. ix

Faustus (1601?, 1604?)

Of all that he hath written to the stage his *Dr. Faustus* hath made the greatest noise with its Devils, and such like tragical sport.

Edward Phillips, 1675, *Theatrum Poetarum Anglicanorum,*
ed. Brydges, p. 113

Marlowe is said to have been tainted with atheistical positions, to have denied God and the Trinity. To such a genius the history of Faustus must

have been delectable food: to wander in fields where curiosity is forbidden to go, to approach the dark gulf near enough to look in, to be busied in speculations which are the rottenest part of the core of the fruit that fell from the tree of knowledge. Barabas the Jew, and Faustus the conjurer, are offsprings of a mind which at least delighted to dally with interdicted subjects. They both talk a language which a believer would have been tender of putting into the mouth of a character though but in fiction.

Charles Lamb, 1808, *Specimens of Dramatic Poets*

Though an imperfect and unequal performance, is his greatest work. Faustus himself is a rude sketch, but it is a gigantic one. This character may be considered as a personification of the pride of will and eagerness of curiosity, sublimed beyond the reach of fear and remorse.

William Hazlitt, 1820, *Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth,* Lecture II

It is full of poetical beauties; but an intermixture of buffoonery weakens the effect, and leaves it, on the whole, rather a sketch by a great genius than a finished performance. There is an awful melancholy about Marlowe's Mephistopheles, perhaps more impressive than the malignant mirth of that fiend in the renowned work of Goethe. But the fair form of Margaret is wanting; and Marlowe has hardly earned the credit of having breathed a few casual inspirations into a greater mind than his own.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe,* pt. ii, ch. vi, par. 29

Doctor Faustus has many magnificent passages, such as Marlowe of the "mighty line" could not fail to write; but on the whole it is wearisome, vulgar, and ill-conceived. The lowest buffoonery, destitute of wit, fills a large portion of the scenes; and the serious parts want dramatic evolution. There is no character well drawn. The melancholy figure of Mephistopheles has a certain grandeur, but he is not the Tempter, according to the common conception, creeping to his purpose with the cunning of the serpent; nor is he the cold, ironical "spirit that denies"; he is more like the Satan of Byron, with a touch of piety and much repentance. The language he addresses to Faustus is such as would rather frighten than seduce him.

George Henry Lewes, 1855, *Life and Works of Goethe,* p. 469

With regard to the buffoonery of which Hallam so justly complains, I have no hesitation in saying that it must be attributed to any hand rather than

Marlowe's own. The edition of 1604 has been separately reprinted, with the view of showing that this debasing matter was of gradual introduction, the dose being made stronger and stronger to satisfy the taste of the groundlings, a proceeding which can hardly be complained of in a generation which appears to relish few things so much as the beastly grimaces, hurdy-gurdy tunes, and stupid threadbare jokes of pack after pack of buffoons smeared all over with filthy lampblack. If by any chance the original MS. of the *Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* is ever recovered, it is almost safe to predicate that Marlowe's share would be found to consist solely and entirely of those grand, daring, and affecting scenes which will last as long as the English language.

L[t] Col. Francis Cunningham, 1870, ed. *Works of Christopher Marlowe,* Introduction, p. xiv

This is unquestionably Marlowe's greatest play; it is indeed one of the greatest plays that the world possesses; for in it the poet has been compelled, by the nature of his story and his own profound imagination, to pass beyond the limits of Machiavellism, and to sound the depths of the human heart, in an exhibition of that conflict between Will and Conscience which was embodied in outline in the old Moralities, and found its highest development in the dramas of Shakespeare. In this tragedy accordingly there are more distinct traces of the primitive traditions of the English theatre than in any other of Marlowe's works.

W. J. Courthope, 1897, *A History of English Poetry,* vol. II, p. 410

Although it is among the most chaotic, there can be little doubt that *Doctor Faustus* is the best of Marlowe's plays. For the chaos here is not quite out of keeping with the wild theme; and that theme itself, in every other respect, is absolutely suited to Marlowe's genius. The whole spirit of the Faust story comports with—nay, positively requires—not so much a regular dramatic action as a phantasmagoria; and its separate scenes are, most of them, well suited to stimulate the towering imagination, the passionate fancy, the tameless and restless energy of this wonderfully though partially endowed poet. That the Helen passage and the death scene contain, with the single exception—if with that—of the great purple patch of *Tamburlaine,* as to "the pens that poets held," the most exquisite outbursts of sheer poetry in Marlowe is no more than we should expect from the coincidence of inspiring quality in the subject and formal competence in the worker.

George Saintsbury, 1898, *A Short History of English Literature,* p. 292

The Jew of Malta

[first published 1633 as *The Rich Jew of Malta*]

The author seems to have relied on the horror inspired by the subject, and the national disgust excited against the principal character, to rouse the feelings of the audience: for the rest, it is a tissue of gratuitous, unprovoked and incredible atrocities, which are committed, one upon the back of the other, by the parties concerned, without motive, passion, or object.

William Hazlitt, 1820, *Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth,* Lecture II

Whatever may be thought of the extraordinary accumulation of villanies perpetrated by the hero, the construction of the plot is extremely ingenious, and, notwithstanding its elaborateness, singularly clear and intelligible. Though the action rises from startling to more startling effects, a climax is reserved to the last. And in form the play deserves high praise; for the vigour and ease of its versification are alike remarkable.

Adolphus William Ward, 1875, A *History of English Dramatic Literature,* vol. I, p. 185

The masterful grasp that marks the opening scene was a new thing in English tragedy. Language so strong, so terse, so dramatic, had never been heard before on the English stage. In the two first acts there is not a trace of juvenility; all is conceived largely and worked out in firm, bold strokes. Hardly Shakespeare's touch is more absolutely true and unfaltering; nor is it too much to say that, had the character been developed throughout on the same scale as in the first two acts, Barrabas would have been worthy to stand alongside of Shylock. But in the last three acts vigorous drawing is exchanged for caricature; for a sinister life-like figure we have a grotesque stage-villain, another Aaron. How this extraordinary transformation was affected, why the poet, who started with such clear-eyed vision and stern resolution, swerved so blindly and helplessly from the path, is a question that may well perplex critics.

A. H. Bullen, 1884, ed. *Works of Christopher Marlowe,* Introduction, vol. I, p. xl

The Tragedie of Dido (1594)

While following closely the story of the early books of the *Aeneid,* and even putting into the mouths of the leading characters several Virgilian lines, the drama is thoroughly original and merits more attention than it usually receives, especially as it contains Marlowe's most elaborate picture of a woman.

Frederick S. Boas, 1896, *Shakspere and his Predecessors,* p. 58

Hero and Leander (1598)

Then, now, most strangely intellectual fire
That, proper to my soul, hast power to inspire
Her burning faculties, and with the wings
Of thy unspherèd flame, visits't the springs
Of spirits immortal. Now, as swift as Time
Doth follow motion, find th' eternal clime
Of his free soul, whose living subject stood
Up to the chin in the Pierian flood,
And drunk to me half this Musæan story,
Inscribing it to deathless memory:
Confer with it, and make my pledge as deep
That neither's draught be consecrate to sleep:
Tell it how much his late desires I tender
(If yet it know not), and to light surrender
My soul's dark offspring.

George Chapman, 1600, *Hero and Leander*, bk. iii

The fragment of *Hero and Leander* is incomparably the finest product of Marlowe's genius: it is one of the chief treasures of the language. The poet is fairly intoxicated with the beauty of his subject: he has thought about the two lovers, and dreamed about them, and filled his imagination withe their charms; he writes with ecstacy as if obeying an impulse that he can resist no longer, and in every other line expressions escape him that have all the warmth of involuntary bursts of admiration. He dashes into the subject with passionate eagerness, outlining the situation with a few impatient strokes.

William Minto, 1874-85, *Characteristics of English Poets*, p. 239

Written in the so-called heroic verse, it bears no resemblance to any other poem in that metre composed before, nor, perhaps, is there any written since which decidedly recalls it, unless it be *Endymion*. "Pagan" it is in a sense, with the Paganism of the Renascence: the more pagan the better, considering the subject. Nothing of the deeper thought of the time, no "looking before and after," no worship of a Gloriana or hostility to an Acrasia, intereferes with its frank acceptance of sensuous beauty and joy.

Andrew Cecil Bradley, 1880, *English Poets*, ed. Ward, vol. I, p. 415

No poem in our language is more classical, in the sense at least in which Politian and Sanazzaro would have understood the term, and assuredly

no poem in our language is more sensuously lovely, than *Hero and Leander*. It reminds us in some respects of the best episodes in the *Metamorphoses*, and it reminds us still more frequently of Keats's narratives, not, indeed, of *Isabella* or of *The Eve of Saint Agnes*, but indirectly of *Endymion*, and directly of *Lamia*.

John Churton Collins, 1895, *Essays and Studies*, p. 161

General

> Marley, the Muses' darling . . .
> Fit to write passions for the souls below,
> If any wretched souls in passion speak.
>
> George Peele, 1593, *The Honour of the Garter, Ad Mœcenaatem Prologus*

Marlowe was in all essential points the direct opposite of Greene; while the latter delighted in a cheerful grace, and agreeableness of style, Marlowe aimed solely and exclusively at the forcible, extraordinary, and sublime. He possessed, in fact a vigorous, and—not to lay too much stress upon the term—a great mind; but his heart was waste and rude, and it is from the heart that every truly great thought proceeds. Accordingly, under his hand, the forcible becomes the forced, the uncommon the unnatural, while the great and sublime sinks into the grotesque and monstrous. . . . To such a height does he frequently accumulate terrific and monstrous events, deeds of violence, enormities and crimes, that no corresponding catastrophe nor adequate punshment, can be devised for them; and the close of the piece consequently appears as a low and narrow outlet through which the mass of the action seeks in vain to force its way. Accordingly, the last moments of his heroes, however they may distress and agitate, never exalt or elevate the feelings. His notion of tragedy comprehends in it nothing of solace and atonement. Nevertheless, his mental vigour alone has enabled him to do that which was wholly beyond the power of Greene; his poetical matter is well connected and condensed; his dramas have for their basis a vital concrete idea, a fully defined view of life and the world out of which the whole composition appears to have grown naturally, and organically to have perfected itself.

Hermann Ulrici, 1839, *Shakspeare's Dramatic Art*, p. 45

He is intense, but narrow. The central principle of his mind was self-will, and this is the bond which binds together his strangely huddled faculties. Of all English poets, he most reminds us of Byron; ruder, it may be, but at the same time more colossal in his proportions. He is a glorious old

heathen, "large in heart and brain,"—a fiery and fickle Goth, on whose rough and savage energies a classical culture has been piled, tossed among the taverns, and theatres, and swelling spirits of London, to gratify the demands of his senses in some other way than by acts of brilliant pillage. In his lustiness, his absence of all weak emotions, his fierce delight in the mere feeling of self, in the heedlessness with which he heaps together rubbish and diamonds, and in the frequent "starts and strange far-flights of his imagination," he is the model of irregular genius. His mind, in its imperiousness, disregarded by instinct the natural relations of things, forced objects into the form of his individual passions, and lifted his vices into a kind of Satanic dignity, by exaggerating them into shapes colossal. His imagination, hot, swift, impatient of control, pervaded by the fiery essence of his blood, and giving wings to the most reckless desires, riots in the maddest visions of strength and pride. Of all writers, he seems to feel the heartiest joy in the mere exercise of power, regardless of all the restraints which make power beneficent.

Edwin P. Whipple, 1846, *North American Review*;
Essays and Reviews, vol. II, p. 19

For thou, if ever godlike foot there trod
These fields of ours, wert surely like a god.
Who knows what splendour of strange dreams was shed
With sacred shadow and glimmer of gold and red
From hallowed windows, over stone and sod,
On thine unbowed, bright, insubmissive head?
The shadow stayed not but the splendour stays,
Our brother, till the last of English days.
No day nor night on English earth shall be
Forever, spring nor summer, Junes nor Mays,
But somewhat as a sound or gleam of thee
Shall come on us like morning from the sea.

Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1866, "In the Bay,"
Poems and Ballads, ss. xviii, xix

Marlowe has been styled, and not unjustly styled, the father of English dramatic poetry. When we reflect on the conditions of the stage before he produced *Tamburlaine,* and consider the state in which he left it after the appearance of *Edward II,* we shall be able to estimate his true right to this title. . . . Out of confusion he brought order, following the clew of his own genius through a labyrinth of dim unmastered possibilities. Like all great craftsmen, he worked by selection and exclusion on the

whole mass of material ready to his hand; and his instinct in this double process is the proof of his originality.

John Addington Symonds, 1884, *Shakspere's Predecessors in the English Drama*, pp. 585, 586

Mr. J. A. Symonds has defined the leading motive of Marlowe's work as *L'Amour de l'Impossible*—"the love or lust of unattainable things." Never was a poet fired with a more intense aspiration for ideal beauty and ideal power. As some adventurous Greek of old might have sailed away, with warning voices in his ears, past the pillars of Hercules in quest of fabled islands beyond the sun, so Marlowe started on his lonely course, careless of tradition and restraint, resolved to seek and find "some world far from ours" where the secret springs of Knowledge should be opened and he should touch the lips of Beauty.

A. H. Bullen, 1884, ed. *Works of Christopher Marlowe*, Introduction, vol. I, p. lxxii

As the real founder, though not precisely the initiator, both of English tragedy and English blank verse—as being thus in a certain sense the father of our poetry more truly than even Chaucer, for Chaucer's direct influence upon Shakespeare and Milton is not great, while Marlowe's unquestionably is—the immense importance of his position can scarcely be overstated. And it is not merely a relative or historical importance either. Judged upon their absolute merits as poetry, such passages as those in which Faustus addresses the apparition of Helen, disclose by their magnificence of hyperbole a power of style belonging to the great poets alone. His imagination is of wide sweep, with an adventurous, intrepid, and untamable wing. Violent, sinister, rebellious, unblest, he has something of the grandeur of a fallen angel about him, and in the dayspring of our drama he is Lucifer, son of the morning.

William Watson, 1893, *Excursions in Criticism*, p. 5

Christopher Marlowe is one of the most fascinating figures in our own, or indeed in any, literature. In the temple of poetic fame the highest places are sacred to genius that has mounted securely to its meridian splendour, to Homer, Dante, Shakespere. But seats only lower than these, and hallowed with perhaps richer offerings of human sympathy and love, are granted to genius dead ere its time, cut down in the freshness of its morning radiance. It is here that Marlowe is to be sought, side by side with Collins and Shelley and Keats. What the world has lost by the untimely close of his career we cannot know; but we do know that, even had he lived, he could never have been "another Shakspere." For nature, so lavish

to him in other ways, had entirely withheld from him the priceless gift of humour, and the faculty of interpreting commonplace human experience. He never learnt the secrets of a woman's heart, and he knew of no love lifted above the level of sense. Between him and his mighty succssor there is, and there must always have been, an impassable gulf. Marlowe is the rapturous lyrist of limitless desire, Shakspere the majestic spokesman of inexorable moral law.

Frederick S. Boas, 1896, *Shakspere and his Predecessors*, p. 61

THOMAS KYD

1557?-1595?

Dramatist, probably born in London, about 1557, and educated at Merchant Taylors' School, was most likely brought up as a scrivener under his father. His bloody and bombastic tragedies early brought him reputation, specially the two plays having for their hero Jeronimo, marshal of Spain. The first was not published till 1605; the second was licensed in 1592 as *The Spanish Tragedy*. Kyd translated from the French (1594) a tedious tragedy on Pompey's daughter Cornelia, almost certainly produced *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune* (1582) and *Solyman and Perseda* (1592), and has been credited with a share in other plays. He is supposed to have died in poverty in 1595. His name survives in Jonson's "sporting Kyd and Marlowe's mighty line."

Patrick and Groome, eds., 1897, *Chambers's Biographical Dictionary*, p. 561

SEE: *Works*, ed. Frederick S. Boas, 1901, repr. 1955.

The Spanish Tragedy (1594)

These scenes (of Hieronimo's madness), which are the very salt of the play (which without them is but a caput mortuum, such another piece of flatness as Locrine), Hawkins, in his re-publication of this tragedy, has thrust out of the text into the notes; as omitted in the second Edition, "printed for Ed Allde, amended of such gross blunders as passed in the first;" and thinks them to have been *foisted in by the players*.—A late discovery at Dulwich College has ascertained that two sundry payments were made to Ben Jonson by the theatre for furnishing additions to Hieronimo. There is nothing in the undoubted plays of Jonson which would authorize us to suppose that he could have supplied the scenes in question. I should suspect the agency of some "more potent spirit." Webster might have furnished them. They are full of that wild solemn preternatural cast of grief which bewilders us in the *Duchess of Malfy*.

Charles Lamb, 1827, *Notes on the Garrick Plays*

He lacked Marlowe's sensitive ear, his joy in the roll of golden periods. But his dialogue, at its best, has the quality of passionate directness and simplicity essential to the highest dramatic achievement. The love-scenes, short as they are, between Belimperia and Horatio touch a responsive chord in our hearts, and the mingled agony and rage of Hieronimo are rendered with masterly power. In this complex delineation of character Kyd made a notable step forward, and he may justly claim to be the pioneer of introspective tragedy in England. Yet the moral basis of the play is crude in the extreme. A wild insatiable fury of revenge is the sole animating impulse of all the chief personages, and suffices to condone every atrocity, even the murder of the innocent Duke of Castile. But, in spite of defects, *The Spanish Tragedy* is an organic creation, and fully deserved its widespread influence. It holds a unique place in dramatic literature, reaching back to *Gorboduc,* and forward to Shakspere's early plays, probably even to *Hamlet* and *King Lear.*

Frederick S. Boas, 1896, *Shakspere and his Predecessors,* p. 65

Kyd's style in the *Spanish Tragedy* is indeed made up of the more vulgar elements in Seneca's and Marlowe's plays, without the intellectual quality that distinguishes either. From Seneca he borrows ghosts and "sentences"; Marlowe provides him with precedents of rant and bloodshed. By the help of these hints, Kyd managed to put together a tragedy utterly devoid of any true tragic motive, but not wanting in striking scenes and melodramatic effects, and acceptable accordingly to that public taste which is always caught by loud noise and glaring colours. The *Spanish Tragedy* is, I think, plainly written in emulation of Marlowe's *Jew of Malta.* Like that tragedy it represents an action of coldblooded murder followed by a sanguinary revenge. But whereas Marlowe gives a certain intellectual interest to his play, by making the Jew the victim of injustice in a situation contrived with great force and probability, Kyd is utterly unable to produce such a complication among his *dramatis personæ* as shall prepare the way for the *denouement* he has imagined.

W. J. Courthope, 1897, *A History of English Poetry,* vol. II, p. 424

General

A writer that seems to have been of pretty good esteem for versifying in former times, being quoted amongst some of the more fam'd poets, as Spenser, Drayton, Daniel, Lodge, &c. with whom he was either cotemporary or not much later. There is particularly remembered his tragedy *Cornelia.*

Edward Phillips, 1675, *Theatrum Poetarum Anglicanorum,* ed. Brydges, p. 205

His tragedies with those of *Rotru, Serre,* and others of that time, are of a mean Character. 'Tis evident to any that have read his Tragedies, which are Nine in Number, that he propos'd *Seneca* for his Model, and he was thought in those days to have happily succeeded in his Design. This translation is writ in blank Verse, only here and there, at the close of a Paragraph (if I may so speak) the Reader is presented with a Couplet. The *Chorus's* are writ in several Measures of Verse, and are very sententious.

Gerard Langbaine, 1691, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets,* p. 316

Kyd was a poet of very considerdable mind, and deserves, in some respects, to be ranked above more notorious contemporaries: his thoughts are often both new and natural; and if in his plays he dealt largely in blood and death, he only partook of the habit of the time, in which good sense and discretion were often outraged for the purpose of gratifying the crowd. In taste he is inferior to Peele, but in force and character he is his superior; and if Kyd's blank-verse be not quite so smooth, it has decidedly more spirit, vigour, and variety. As a writer of blank-verse, I am inclined, among the predecessors of Shakespeare, to give Kyd the next place to Marlowe.

John Payne Collier, 1831, *History of English Dramatic Poetry,* vol. III, p. 207

Kyd's services to English tragedy were, we think, more important than is commonly supposed. He stands midway between two great schools; between the literary and academic school on the one hand, and the domestic and realistic school on the other. Regarded superficially, he might perhaps be confounded with a mere copyist of Italian models. . . . And yet, with all this, the impression which his plays make on us is very different from the impression made on us by the Italian tragedies. Nor is it difficult to explain the reason. The canvas of Kyd is more crowded; his touch is broader and bolder, his colour fuller and deeper; his action is infinitely more diversified, animated, and rapid; his characters are more human; he has more passion, he has more pathos. If he aims too much at sensational effects, he is sometimes simple and natural.

John Churton Collins, 1895, *Essays and Studies,* p. 180

GEORGE PEELE

1558?-1597?

Born, in London, 1558(?). At Christ's Hospital, 1565-70(?). Matriculated, Broadgates Hall, Oxford, March 1571; removed to Christ Church,

1574; Student, 1574-79; B.A., 12 June 1577; M.A., 6 July 1579. Married, 1580(?). Became actor and dramatist. Notorious for dissipated life. Died, 1597(?). WORKS: *The Araygnement of Paris* (anon.), 1584; *The Device of the Pageant borne before Woolston Dixie, Mayor* (anon.), 1585; *A Farewell . . . to Sir John Norris & Syr Francis Drake,* 1589; *An Eclogue Gratulatory,* 1589; *Polyhymnia,* 1590; *Descensus Astreæ,* 1591; *The Famous Chronicle of King Edward the first,* 1593; *The Honour of the Garter* (1593); *The Battell of Alcazar* (anon.), 1594; *The Old Wives' Tale* (under initials: G. P.), 1595. POSTHUMOUS: *The Love of King David and Fair Bethsabe,* 1599; *Anglorum Feriæ* (priv. pdt.), 1830. COLLECTED WORKS: ed. by A. Dyce (3 vols.), 1829-39; ed. by A. H. Bullen (2 vols.), 1888.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 225

SEE: *Life and Works,* ed. C. T. Prouty and others, 1952-61, 2 v.

PERSONAL

And thou no lesse deseruing then the other two, in some things rarer, in nothing inferiour, driuen as myselfe, to extreame shifts, a little have I to say to thee; and, were it not an idolatrous oath, I would sweare by sweet S. George thou art vnworthy better hap, sith thou dependest on so meane a stay. Base-minded men all three of you, if by my misery yee bee not warned; for vnto none of you, like me, sought those burs to cleaue; those puppits, I meane, that speake from our mouths, those anticks garnisht in our colours. Is it not strange that I to whome they all haue bin beholding, is it not like that you to whome they all haue bin beholding, shall, were yee in that case that I am now, be both of them at once forsaken?

Robert Greene, 1593, *Groatsworth of Wit*

As Anacreon died by the pot: so George Peele, by the pox.

Francis Meres, 1598, *Palladis Tamia*

A sad death for one who hod sung "The Praise of Chastity." Had Peele been faithful to his honest wife and borne in mind the words of his Œnone—

> "They that do change old love for new,
> Pray God they change for worse!"

the end might have been different. But he died a long time ago, and possibly Meres was misinformed. He lives as the author of a charming pastoral and some dainty lyrics.

A. H. Bullen, 1888, ed. *The Works of George Peele,* Introduction, vol. I, p. xliii

Arraignment of Paris (1584)

I dare commend him to all that know him, as the chiefe supporter of pleasance nowe liuing, the *Atlas* of Poetrie, & *primus verborum Artifex;* whose first encrease, the *Arraignement of Paris* might plead to your opinions, his pregnant dexteritie of wit, and manifold varietie of inuention; wherein (*me iudice*) hee goeth a step beyond all that write.

Thomas Nashe, 1587, *To the Gentlemen Students of both Universities,* ed. Grosart, vol. I, p. xxxvi

Written in Lyly's manner, it is, nevertheless, far superior to the best pieces of that author: for Peele possessed all the excellencies of Lyly, in an equal, if not a higher degree, without his faults. Thomas Nash, who flourished about 1588, calls him, with good reason, *"primus verborum artifex."* An elegant diction, graceful expression, and an harmonious and flowing versification, are, in fact, his principal merits. On the other hand, in force and depth of thought, in vigour of language and finish of composition, he did not come up to his model, the famous Marlowe.

Hermann Ulrici, 1839, *Shakspeare's Dramatic Art,* p. 37

Peele's best work, *The Arraignment of Paris.* . . . The *Arraignment* is indeed a choice piece of work, quaint and fanciful as some old curiously-knotted garden pranked in all its summer-bravery. It should be read when one is in the mood for appreciating it. If we are seeking in poetry a "criticism of life" it would be idle to turn to the *Arraignment;* but at times when we would fain forget life's perplexities, we shall find the pretty cadences of Peele's pastoral as grateful as the plashing of fountains in the dog-days. A variety of metres is employed in the *Arraignment.* Rhymed lines of fourteen syllables (a pleasant measure, when properly handled, for pastoral subjects) and rhymed lines of ten syllables predominate; but there are passages, notably Paris' oration before the Council of the Gods, which show that Peele wrote a more musical blank verse than had yet been written by any English poet.

A. H. Bullen, 1888, ed. *Works of George Peele,* Introduction, vol. I, p. xxvi

General

We are told that his works not only succeeded very greatly in his life but that they were read with great pleasure after his death. He is said in particular to have been a good pastoral poet. . . . He seems to have derived his reputation more from having been the object of patronage to a noble-

man, than to the muses, for his merry pranks . . . lifted him into a degree of public opinion, which his works do not by any means appear to bear out. In short his profligate manners and irregular life but little qualified him for a knowledge of that novelty indispensably necessary in the composition of real dramatic entertainment; and it is, therefore, though one of his plays has been ignorantly attributed to Shakespeare, that the licentious George Peele, like his imitators, Rochester and Killigrew, is little known but by his jests, "which," an author says, "in literature may be compared to the tricks of a sharper in society, for they are false, specious and imposing.

Charles Dibdin, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage,* vol. II, p. 336

The reader must not imagine that I consider Peele on a par with Marlowe as an improver of the English drama. I cannot but be aware that Marlowe had a far more powerful intellect than Peele, and a far deeper insight into the human heart: yet, though Peele was quite unequal to the production of dramas so full of terror and pity as *Faustus* and *Edward the Second,* it may not be too much to assert that his *David and Bethsabe* vies in tenderness and poetic beauty with any of the plays of his sublime associate.—The superiority of Peele to Greene is, I conceive, on the whole, unquestionable.

Alexander Dyce, 1861, ed. *The Works of George Peele, Life,* p. 346

The truth is that Peele exercised far less influence over the development of our Drama than either Lyly or Greene, not to mention Marlowe. . . . Peele's *Old Wives' Tale* deserves to be remembered because of its resemblance to *Comus.* If Milton borrowed the conception of his Masque from this rustic comedy, he undoubtedly performed the proverbial miracle of making a silk purse out of a sow's ear.

John Addington Symonds, 1884, *Shakspere's Predecessors in the English Drama,* pp. 564, 566

A man less interesting in his life and character than Greene, but with a finer range of imagination, which gave an impulse of its own to the development of the drama. . . . His genius was the product of the love of pageantry and masquerade, a legacy of the allegorical tradition of the Middle Ages, which was deeply rooted in the taste of the English people under Elizabeth. He was a master of whatever was pictorial and external in theatrical art. As a dramatic rhetorician he was hardly, if at all, inferior to Marlowe; in wealth of poetic diction, warmth of fancy, and richness of

invention, he perhaps excelled all his contemporardies whose names are usually coupled with his own. But in the higher creative powers he was deficient. His plays contain no character that rouses the affection; no imaginative situation that awakens the interest; no universal sentiment that touches the heart.

W. J. Courthope, 1897, *A History of English Poetry*, vol. II, pp. 396, 401

EDMUND SPENSER
1552-1599

Born, in London, 1552(?). Early education at Merchant Taylor's School. To Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, as Sizar, 20 May 1569; B.A., 16 Jan. 1573; M.A., 26 June 1576. Settled in London, 1578. Secretary to Lord-Lieut. of Ireland, 1580. Received grant of land in co. Cork, 1586. Clerk of Council of Munster, 1588. Visited by Sir Walter Raleigh, 1589; to England with him, to be presented at Court. Lived in Ireland, 1591-95. Married (Elizabeth Boyle?), 1595. Sheriff of co. Cork, 1598. Died, in London, 16 Jan. 1599. Buried in Westminster Abbey. WORKS: *The Shepheardes Calendar*, 1579; *Three Proper, and Wittie, Familiar Letters: lately passed between Two Universitie Men* (anon.), 1580; *The Faerie Queene*, bks. i-iii, 1590; bks. iv-vi, 1596; *Muiopotmos*, 1590; *Complaints*, 1591; *Prosopopoia*, 1591; *Teares of the Muses*, 1591; *Daphnaida*, 1591; *Amoretti and Epithalamion*, 1595; *Colin Clout's Come Home Againe*, 1595; *Prothalamion*, 1596; *Foure Hymnes*, etc., 1596; *A View of the State of Ireland*, 1596. COLLECTED WORKS: ed. by J. Aikin (5 vols.), 1842; ed. by A. B. Grosart (9 vols.), 1882-84.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors*, p. 265

SEE: *Works: a Variorum Edition*, ed. Edwin Greenlaw, C. G. Osgood, F. M. Padelford and others, 1932-49, 9 v.; *Index to Spenser Variorum*, compiled by C. G. Osgood, 1957; Janet Spens, *Spenser's Faerie Queene: An Interpretation*, 1934; Paul E. McClane, *Spenser's Shepheardes Calendar: A Study in Elizabethan Allegory*, 1961; *Annotated Bibliography of Edmund Spenser, 1937-1960*, ed. Waldo F. McNeir and Foster Provost, 1962; M. Pauline Parker, *The Allegory of The Faerie Queene*, 1960; William Nelson, ed., *Form and Convention in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser*, 1961; Graham Hough, *A Preface to The Faerie Queene*, 1962; William Nelson, *The Poetry of Edmund Spenser: A Study*, 1963.

PERSONAL

When hir Majestie had giuen order that Spenser should haue a reward for his poems, but Spenser could haue nothing, he presented hir with these verses:

It pleased your Grace vpon a tyme
To graunt me reason for my ryme,
But from that tyme vntill this season
I heard of neither ryme nor reason. (Touse.)

John Manningham, 1602-03, *Diary*, ed. Bruce, p. 43

That the Irish having rob'd Spenser's goods, and burnt his house and a little child new born, he and his wyfe escaped; and after he died for lake [lack] of bread in King Street, and refused 20 pieces sent to him by my Lord of Essex, and said, He was sorrie he had no time to spend them. That in that paper S. W. Raughly had of the Allegories of his Fayrie Queen, by the Blating Beast the Puritans were understood, by the false Duessa the Q. of Scots.

William Drummond, 1619, *Notes of Ben Jonson's Conversations*, ed. Laing, p. 12

Edmund Spenser, a Londoner by birth, and a scholar also of the University of Cambridge, born under so favourable an aspect of the Muses that he surpassed all the English Poets of former times, not excepting Chaucer himself, his fellow-citizen. But by a fate which still follows Poets, he always wrestled with poverty, though he had been secretary to the Lord Grey, Lord Deputy of Ireland. For scarce had he there settled himself into a retired privacy and got leisure to write, when he was by the rebels thrown out of his dwelling, plundered of his goods, and returned into England a poor man, where he shortly after died and was interred at Westminster, near to Chaucer, at the charge of the Earl of Essex, his hearse being attended by poets, and mournful elegies and poems with the pens that wrote them thrown into his tomb.

William Camden, 1628, *Annales rerum Anglicarum et Hibernicarum regnante Elizabetha*, ed Hearne, Obituary, year 1598-99, vol. III, p. 783

The Faërie Queene, Colin Clout, and his two cantos on *Mutabilitie,* abound with allegorical or actual descriptions of his Irish life, and of the scenery, and especially the rivers, about his estate here. . . . The remains of the castle, which consist only of part of the tower, at the southernmost corner, stand on a green mound of considerable extent, overlooking the lake, or rather a winding sort of pond, overgrown with potamogeton. . . . Here he spent twelve years, and, from every thing that we can learn from his poetry, to his own great satisfaction. . . . Here he accomplished and saw given to the world half his great work. . . . Here, too, he married the woman of his heart, chosen on the principle of his poetry, not for her lands, but for her beauty and her goodness. . . . Here, too, he enjoyed the

memorable visit of Sir Walter Raleigh which he commemorates in *Colin Clout*. . . . When we hear Kilcolman described by Spenser's biographers as "romantic and delightful," it is evident that they judged of it from mere fancy; and when all writers about him talk of the Mulla "flowing through his grounds," and "past his castle," they give the reader a most erroneous idea. The castle, it must be remembered, is on a wide plain; the hills are at a couple of miles or more distant; and the Mulla is two miles off. We see nothing at the castle but the wide boggy plain, the distant naked hills, and the weedy pond under the castle walls. Such is Kilcolman.

William Howitt, 1847, *Homes and Haunts of the Most Eminent British Poets*, pp. 28, 34, 36, 38, 40, 41

"Rosalinde" reads, anagrammatically, into Rose Daniel; for, according to Camden, "a letter may be doubled, or rejected, or contrariwise, if the sense fall aptly;" we thus get rid of the redundant *e*, and have a perfect anagram. Now Spenser had an intimate and beloved friend and brother-poet, named Samuel Daniel. . . . The supposition that Rose Daniel was Rosalinde satisfies every requisite, and presents a solution of the mystery; the anagram is perfect; the poet's acquaintance with the brother naturally threw him into contact with the sister; while the circumstance of her marriage with another justifies the complaint of infidelity, and accounts for the "insurmountable barrier," that is, a living husband.

C. G. Halpine, 1858, *Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 2, p. 677

Soon after his death—such is the curt statement—"his widow married one Roger Seckerstone." Did Edmund Spenser, then, after all, appear to his wife Elizabeth as he appeared to Mr. Beeston,—simply as "a little man, who wore short hair, little band, and little cuffs"? One would suppose that the memory of so much genius and glory and calamity would have been better than the presence of "one Roger Seckerstone"! Among the thousands of millions of men born on the planet, it was her fortune to be the companion of Edmund Spenser, and "soon after his death she married one Roger Seckerstone"! It required two years of assiduous courtship, illustrated by sonnets which have made her name immortal, before the adoring poet could hymn, in a transport of gratitude, her acceptance of his hand; but fortunate Mr. Seckerstone did not have to wait! She saw her husband laid in Westminster Abbey, mourned by all that was noble in rank or high in genius, and then, as in the case of another too-celebrated marriage,

"The funeral baked meats
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables!"

Edwin P. Whipple, 1859-68, *The Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*, p. 203

The differences between Chaucer and Spenser are seen at a glance in their portraits. Chaucer's face is round, good-humoured, constitutionally pensive, and thoughtful. You see in it that he has often been amused, and that he may easily be amused again. Spenser's is of sharper and keener feature, disdainful, and breathing that severity which appertains to so many of the Elizabethan men. A fourteenth-century child, with delicate prescience, would have asked Chaucer to assist her in a strait, and would not have been disappointed. A sixteenth-century child in like circumstances would have shrunk from drawing on herself the regards of the sterner-looking man. We can trace the descent of the Chaucerian face and genius in Shakspeare and Scott, of the Spenserian in Milton and Wordsworth. In our own day, Mr. Browning takes after Chaucer, Mr. Tennyson takes after Spenser.

Alexander Smith, 1863, *Dreamthorp*, p. 214

He died poor, but not in want. On the whole, his life may be reckoned a happy one, as in the main the lives of the great poets must have commonly been. . . . We should measure what Spenser says of his worldly disappointments by the bitterness of the unavailing tears he shed for Rosalinde. A careful analysis of these leaves no perceptible residuum of salt, and we are tempted to believe that the passion itself was not much more real than the pastoral accessories of pipe and crook. I very much doubt whether Spenser ever felt more than one profound passion in his life, and that luckily was for his *Faery Queen*. He was fortunate in the friendship of the best men and women of his time, in the seclusion which made him free of the still better society of the past, in the loving recognition of his countrymen. All that we know of him is amiable and of good report. He was faithful to the friendships of his youth, pure in his loves, unspotted in his life. Above all, the ideal with him was not a thing apart and unattainable, but the sweetener and ennobler of the streets and the fireside.

James Russell Lowell, 1875-90, *Spenser, Prose Works*, Riverside ed., vol. IV, pp. 297, 298

The Shepherd's Calendar (1579)

Now, as touching the generall dryft and purpose of his Æglogues, I mind not to say much, him selfe labouring to conceale it. Onely this appeareth, that his unstayed yougth had long wandred in the common Labyrinth of Love, in which time to mitigate and allay the heate of his passion, or els to warne (as he sayth) the young shepheards, s. his equalls and companions, of his unfortunate folly, he compiled these xij Æglogues, which,

for that they be proportioned to the state of the xij monethes, he termeth *The Shepheards Calendar,* applying an olde name to a new worke.

Edward Kirke?, 1579, *Spenser's Shepheards Calendar, Epistle to Gabriell Harvey*

Whose fine poeticall witt, and most exquisite learning, as he shewed aboundantly in that peece of worke, in my judgment inferiour to the workes neither of *Theocritus* in Greeke, nor *Virgill* in Latine, whom hee narrowly immitateth: so I nothing doubt, but if his other workes were common abroade, which are as I thinke in ye close custodie of certaine his freends, we should haue of our owne Poets, whom wee might matche in all respects with the best. And among all other his workes whatsoeuer, I would wysh to haue the sight of hys *English Poet,* which his freend E. K. did once promise to publishe, which whether he performed or not, I knowe not, if he did, my happe hath not beene so good as yet to see it. . . . This place haue I purposely reserued for one, who if not only, yet in my judgment principally deserueth the tytle of the rightest English Poet, that euer I read: that is, the Author of *The Sheepeheardes Kalendar,* intituled to the woorthy Gentleman Master *Philip Sydney,* whether is was Master *Sp.* or what rare Scholler in Pembrooke Hall soeuer, because himself and his freendes, for what respect I knowe not, would not reeuale it.

William Webbe, 1586, *A Discourse of English Poetrie,* ed. Arber, pp. 23, 35

Hath much Poetrie in his Eglogues: indeede worthy of the reading, if I be not deceiued. That same framing of his style to an old rustick language, I dare not alowe, sith neyther Theocritus in Greeke, Virgill in Latine, nor Sanazar in Italian, did affect it.

Sir Philip Sidney, 1595, *An Apologie for Poetrie,* ed. Arber, pp. 62, 63

His Eclogues are somewhat too long, if we compare them with the ancients. He is sometimes too allegorical, and treats of matters of religion in a pastoral style, as the Mantuan had done before him. He has employed the lyric measure, which is contrary to the practice of the old poets. His stanza is not still the same, nor always well chosen. . . . The addition he has made of a calendar to his Eclogues, is very beautiful; since by this, besides the general moral of innocence and simplicity, which is common to other authors of pastoral, he has one peculiar to himself; he compares human life to the several seasons, and at once exposes to his readers a view of the great and little worlds, in their various changes and aspects.

Alexander Pope, 1704, *A Discourse on Pastorals, Works,* ed. Croker and Elwin, vol. I, pp. 262, 263

A few days since I had the pleasure of conversing with F. Schlegel, one of the first living poets, and a great Æsthetiker; he is the brother of the translator of Shakespeare. He seemed much pleased with one or two pieces by Wordsworth. We talked of our English poets. He holds Spenser to be the greatest in respect to the melody of verse. "When I read him," says he, "I can hardly think it is a Northern language, much less English." He holds his "Pastorals" to be his best work, and yet this is a book of which neither you nor I have read a word. I am resolved to leave my favorite authors and study those I have through mistaken notions or absurd prejudices neglected.

Henry Crabb Robinson, 1802, *Letter to T. R.; Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence,* vol. I, p. 79

Yet two great defects have contributed deeply to injure the popularity of his Calendar; the adoption of a language much too old and obsolete for the age in which it was written, and the too copious introduction of satire on ecclesiastical affairs. The consequence of this latter defect, this incongruous mixture of church polemics, has been, that the aeglogues for May, July, and September, are any thing but pastorals. Simplicity of diction is of the very essence of perfection in pastoral poetry; but vulgar, rugged, and obscure terms, can only be productive of disgust; a result which was felt and complained of by the contemporaries of the poet, and which not all the ingenuity of his old commentator, E. K., can successfully palliate or defend. The pieces which have been least injured by this "ragged and rustical rudeness," as the scholiast aptly terms it, are the pastorals for January, June, October and December, which are indeed very beautiful, and the genuine offspring of the rural reed.

Nathan Drake, 1817, *Shakspeare and his Times,* vol. I, p. 646

Had it been required in 1579, as it was shortly afterwards, that a book licensed at Stationers' Hall should have first received the sanction of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, or of some of the special persons appointed to that duty, it is just possible that *The Shepheardes Calender* might never have seen the light. Some of the eclogues are decidedly of a political and religious aspect; and though the dialogue is distributed among clowns and shepherds, their remarks are often so severe, personal, and objurgatory, that not a few public men might be disposed to take offence at them. Indeed, it is known that Lord Burghley was highly displeased by the applause bestowed upon Archbishop Grindal; and as a young man, who had his fortune to make, Spenser may have been unwilling to put his name to the publication. Edward Kirke subjoined only his initials to the epistle to Harvey, and afforded no clue to the discovery of the

author: the words "unstayed youth," and the "labyrinth of love" in which that "unstayed youth" had involved himself, were much too general to lead even to an inference; while the anticipation of the manner in which the "new poet" would be admired thereafter, and "his worthiness founded by the tromp of fame," might only be looked upon as the expression of the somewhat extravagant opinion of enthusiastic friendship.

John Payne Collier, 1862, ed. *Works of Spenser, Life,* vol. I, p. xxxiv

The identity of "E. K." with Edmund Spenser is nowhere in contradiction with the form and the contents of the commentary. . . . It no longer excites surprise that the merits of G. Harvey, not to mention others, are so much expounded in the Epistle and in the notes. If "E. K." were not Spenser himself, he would have carefully avoided darkening the poet by praising others at his expense, but Spenser doing it himself simply expressed his gratitude to his best friend Harvey. Thus we now know that "E. K." means Edmund Spenser, and this result enables us to say that all allusions to the life and works of Spenser contained in the "Glosse" are genuine and valuable material for the completion of his biography, whereas the letters between him and Harvey have to be used with great care. But it still continues an open question why Spenser took these letters, or what is meant by them. Most probably this will remain an enigma, like the mysterious "W. H." of the dedication to Shakspere's Sonnets.

H. Oskar Sommer, 1890, ed., *The Shepheardes Calender,* Introduction, pp. 24, 25

When *The Shepheard's Calender* was born, the breath of genius inspired the old forms with a Chaucerian freshness and a new melody. And from this moment the popularity of the pastoral was assured. It became the normal mode alike for panegyric and erotic verse. . . . It was Spenser, then, who first made the pastoral a thing of significance for English writers; but he was by no means the creator of it as a literary species.

Edmund K. Chambers, 1895, *English Pastorals,* p. xix

The Faery Queen (1590-96)

The generall end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline: Which for that I conceived shoulde be most plausible and pleasing, being coloured with an historicall fiction, the which the most part of men delight to read, rather for variety of matter than for profite of the ensample, I chose the historye of King Arthure, as most fitte for the excellency of his person, being made famous

by many mens former workes, and also furthest from the daunger of envy, and suspition of present time.

Edmund Spenser, 1590, *Letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, The Faerie Queene*, bk. i

Me thought I saw the grave where Laura lay,
Within that Temple where the vestall flame
Was wont to burne; and passing by that way
To see that buried dust of living fame,
Whose tumbe fair love, and fairer vertue kept,
All suddeinly I saw the Faery Queene:
At whose approch the soule of Petrarke wept,
And from thenceforth those graces were not seene;
For they this Queene attended: in whose steed
Oblivion laid him downe on Lauras herse.
Hereat the hardest stones were seene to bleed,
And grones of buried ghostes the hevens did perse:
Where Homers sprite did tremble all for griefe,
And curst th' accesse of that celestiall theife.

Sir Walter Raleigh, 1590, *A Vision upon this conceipt of the Faery Queene*

Graue Spencer was no sooner entred in to this chapell of Apollo, but these elder fathers of the diuine furie gaue him a lawrer, and sung his welcome: Chaucer call'de him his sonne, and plac'de him at his right hand. All of them (at a signe giuen by the whole of the muses that brought him thither) closing vp their lippes in silence, and turning their eares for attention, to heare him sing out the rest of his fayrie queenes praises.

Thomas Dekker, 1606, *Newes from Hell, Non-Dramatic Works*, ed. Grosart, vol. V, p. xxi

There is no uniformity in the design of Spenser: he aims at the accomplishment of no one action; he raises up a hero for every one of his adventures; and endows each of them with some particular moral virtue, which renders them all equal, without subordination, or preference. Every one is most valiant in his own legend: only we must do him that justice to observe, that magnanimity, which is the character of Prince Arthur, shines throughout the whole poem; and succours the rest, when they are in distress. The original of every knight was then living in the court of Queen Elizabeth; and he attributed to each of them that virtue, which he thought was most conspicuous in them; an ingenious piece of flattery, though it turned not much to his account. Had he lived to finish his poem, in the six remaining legends, it had certainly been more of a piece; but could not have been

perfect, because the model was not true. But Prince Arthur, or his chief patron Sir Philip Sidney, whom he intended to make happy by the marriage of his Gloriana, dying before him, deprived the poet both of means and spirit to accomplish his design. For the rest, his obsolete language and the ill choice of his stanza, are faults but of the second magnitude; for, notwithstanding the first, he is still intelligible, at least after a little practice; and for the last, he is the more to be admired, that, labouring under such a difficulty, his verses are so numerous, so various, and so harmonious, that only Virgil, whom he professedly imitated, has surpassed him among the Romans; and only Mr. Waller among the English.

John Dryden, 1692, *Essay on Satire, Works,*
ed. Scott and Saintsbury, vol. XIII, p. 17

Spencer's [sic] general plan is the representation of six virtues, holiness, temperance, chastity, friendship, justice, and courtesy, in six legends, by six persons. The six personages are supposed, under proper allegories suitable to their respective characters, to do all that is necessary for the full manifestation of the respective virtues which they are to exert. These one might undertake to show, under the several heads are admirably drawn; no images improper, and most surprisingly beautiful. The Redcross Knight runs through the whole steps of the Christian life; Guyon does all that temperance can possibly require; Britomartis (a woman) observes the true rules of unaffected chastity; Arthegal is in every respect of life strictly and wisely just; Calidore is rightly courteous. In short, in fairyland, where knights-errant have a full scope to range, and to do even what Ariostos or Orlandos could not do in the world without breaking into credibility, Spencer's knights have, under those six heads, given a full and truly poetical system of Christian, public, and low life. His legend of friendship is more diffuse, and yet even there the allegory is finely drawn, only the heads various; one knight could not there support all the parts. To do honour to his country, Prince Arthur is an universal hero; in holiness, temperance, chastity, and justice, superexcellent. For the same reason, and to compliment Queen Elizabeth, Gloriana, queen of fairies, whose court was the asylum of the oppressed, represents that glorious queen.

Richard Steele, 1712, *The Spectator,* no. 540, Nov. 19

The chief merit of this poem, no doubt, consists in that surprising vein of fabulous invention, which runs through it, and enriches it every where with imagery and descriptions, more than we meet with in any other modern poem. The author seems to be possessed of a kind of poetical magic, and the figures he calls up to our view rise so thick upon us, that we are at once pleased and distracted with the exhaustless variety of them; so that his

faults may in a manner be imputed to his excellencies. His abundance betrays him into excess, and his judgment is overborn by the torrent of his imagination. That which seems the most liable to exception in this work is the model of it, and the choice the author has made of so romantic a story.

Theophilus Cibber, 1753, *Lives of the Poets,* vol. I, p. 105

Although Spenser formed his *Faerie Queene* upon the fanciful plan of Ariosto, yet it must be confessed, that the adventures of his knights are a more exact and immediate copy of those which we meet with in old romances, or books of chivalry, than of those which form the *Orlando Furioso*. Ariosto's knights exhibit surprising examples of their prowess, and achieve many heroic actions. But our author's knights are more professedly engaged in revenging injuries, and doing justice to the distressed; which was the proper business, and ultimate end of the ancient knight-errantry. And thus, though many of Spenser's incidents are to be found in Ariosto, such as that of blowing a horn, at the sound of which the gates of a castle fly open, of the vanishing of an enchanted palace or garden, after some knight has destroyed the enchanter, and the like; yet these are not more peculiarly the property of Ariosto, than they are common to all ancient romances in general.

Thomas Warton, 1754, *Observations on the Fairy Queen of Spenser,* vol. I, p. 25

The tediousness of continued allegory, and that too seldom striking or ingenious, has also contributed to render the *Fairy Queen* peculiarly tiresome; not to mention the too great frequency of its descriptions, and the languor of its stanza. Upon the whole, Spenser maintains his place upon the shelves, among our English classics; but he is seldom seen on the table; and there is scarcely any one, if he dares to be ingenious, but will confess, that, notwithstanding all the merit of the poet, he affords an entertainment with which the palate is soon satiated. Several writers of late have amused themselves in copying the style of Spenser; and no imitation has been so indifferent as not to bear a great resemblance to the original: his manner is so peculiar, that it is almost impossible not to transfer some of it into the copy.

David Hume, 1759, *The History of England,* vol. IV, Appendix III

I have finished *The Faerie Queene*. I never parted from a long poem with so much regret. He is a poet of a most musical ear—of a tender heart—of a peculiarly soft, rich, fertile, and flowery fancy. His verse always flows, with ease and nature, most abundantly and sweetly; his diffusion is not only

pardonable, but agreeable. Grandeur and energy are not his characteristic qualities. He seems to me a most genuine poet, and to be justly placed after Shakspeare and Milton, and above all other English poets.

Sir James Mackintosh, 1812, *Diary, Memoirs,*
ed. Mackintosh, vol. II, p. 242

A silver trumpet Spenser blows,
And, as its martial notes to silence flee,
From a virgin chorus flows,
A hymn in praise of spotless Chastity.
'Tis still! Wild warblings from the Æolian lyre
Enchantment softly breathe, and tremblingly expire.

John Keats, 1815, *Ode to Apollo,* s. 6

The advantage of the plan lies in what it gets rid of. To one who is not accustomed to it, Spenser's abundance is often oppressive: it is like wading among unmown grass. . . . It is not a poem like the *Iliad,* fiery, passionate, dramatic as life itself; it is all more like to a dream than to waking life. Its descriptions and pictures, it must be confessed, more resemble visions in the clouds than anything to be seen on the earth. And this, we apprehend, is what Coleridge must be understood to mean when he says that Spenser's descriptions are not, in the true sense of the word, picturesque; but then no more are Claude's landscapes picturesque. . . . He is surely one of the very greatest of painters in words; diffuse and florid, no doubt, rather than energetic and expressive; but of what affluence and prodigality of power and resources in his own style, of what inexhaustible ingenuity and invention, of what flowing freedom of movement, of how deep and exquisite a sense of beauty! He is, indeed, distinctively and pre-eminently the Poet of the Beautiful. . . . Spenser's verse is the most abundantly musical in English poetry. Even Milton's, more scientific and elaborate, and also rising at times to more volume and grandeur of tone, has not so rich a natural sweetness and variety, or so deep a pathos.

George L. Craik, 1845, *Spenser and his Poetry,*
vol. III, pp. 123, 124, 125, 126

Spenser's characteristic is the vastness and the overflow of picturesque invention. Like Rubens, he creates whole scenes, beyond the region of all traditions, to express distinct ideas. As with Rubens, his allegory swells its proportions beyond all rule, and withdraws fancy from all law, except in so far as it is necessary to harmonise forms and colours. For, if ordinary spirits receive from allegory a certain oppression, lofty imaginations receive

wings which carry them aloft. Rescued by it from the common conditions of life, they can dare all things, beyond imitation, apart from probability, with no other guide but their inborn energy and their shadowy instincts.

H. A. Taine, 1871, *History of English Literature*, tr. Van Laun, vol. I, bk. ii, ch. i, pp. 179, 195

He chooses his language for its rich canorousness rather than for intensity of meaning. To characterize his style in a single word, I should call it *costly*. None but the daintiest and nicest phrases will serve him, and he allures us from one to the other with such cunning baits of alliteration, and such sweet lapses of verse, that never any word seems more eminent than the rest, nor detains the feeling to eddy around it, but you must go on to the end before you have time to stop and muse over the wealth that has been lavished on you.

James Russell Lowell, 1875-90, *Spenser, Prose Works*, Riverside ed., vol. IV, p. 334

In Spenser the figure of a just man melts away into the quality of justice, the likeness of a chaste woman is dissolved into the abstraction of chastity. Nothing can be more alien from the Latin genius, with its love of clearness and definite limitation, than this indefinite and inevitable cloudiness of depiction rather than conception, which reduces the most tangible things to impalpable properties, resolves the solidest realities into smoke of perfumed metaphor from the crucible of symbolic fancy, and suffuses with Cimmerian mist the hard Italian sunlight. Add to this the cloying sweetness of the Spenserian metre, with all "its treasures of fluidity and sweet ease" (as Mr. Arnold, with his usual studious felicity of exquisite phrase, has so perfectly described it), which leaves at least some readers, after a dose of a few pages, overgorged with a sense that they have been eating a whole hive's harvest of thick pressed honey by great spoonfuls, without one half-penny-worth of bread to this intolerable deal of sweet-stuff; and it is easy to determine why the attraction of this noble poet, for all his luminous colour and lovely melody, the raiment of high thinking, and fine feeling, is perhaps less potent than it should be over minds first nurtured on the stronger fare of Greek or Latin or Italian song.

Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1886, "Short Notes on English Poets," *Miscellanies*, p. 7

The dullest portions of Spenser's poem are those in which he works with most self-consciousness, piecing together definite meanings to definite symbols; where his love of beauty slumbers and his spirit of ingenuity awakes;

where his ideas do not play and part and gather themselves together and deploy themselves abroad, like the shifting and shredding of clouds blown by soft upper airs, but are rather cut out with hard edges by some process of mechanism. . . . Two qualities of Spenser's genius have made *The Faerie Queene* a poem, and saved it from becoming a frigid moral allegory or a mere masque of the fancy: one was his delight in sensuous beauty; the other his delight in lovely and heroic human character.

Edward Dowden, 1887, *Transcripts and Studies,* pp. 287, 308

The *Faerie Queene* came, and in it the second, if not the first, great poem in English. It is not necessary to call or think Spenser a greater poet than Chaucer in order to give the *Faerie Queene,* as a great poem, the precedence over the *Canturbury Tales.* In some qualities, at least, of the poet, the master had the advantage over the scholar. But in others, the scholar's greatest production has by an even greater interval the precedence over any single work of the master's. It has more unity, a deeper-ingrained and more individual colour, a subtler if less primitive charm, and, above all, it has the attraction of an individual and original and, to some fancies at any rate, an absolutely unequalled metrical medium. . . . Such a melodious burst had never sounded in the English tongue before. The wonderful web of imagination, woven so silently and cunningly in its pages, the splendid creations—not merely of poetic fancy but of actual character drawing and ethical construction—which it displays, the consummate skill in language and metre (the former, it may be, like the latter, a little mannered and artificial, but with such an exquisite manner, such a consummate art), the learning, the grasp, the evident reserve of sustained capacity behind—these were things which had never, or but once, been seen before among us.

George Saintsbury, 1895, *Social England,* ed. Traill, vol. III, pp. 514, 515

Amoretti (1595)

To our tongue the sonnet is mortal, and the parent of insipidity. The imitation in some degree of it was extremely noxious to a true poet, our Spenser; and he was the more injudicious by lengthening his stanza in a language so barren of rhymes as ours, and in which several words whose terminations are of similar sounds are so rugged, uncouth, and unmusical. The consequence was, that many lines which he forced into the service to complete the quota of his stanza are unmeaning, or silly, or tending to weaken the thought he would express.

Horace Walpole, 1795, *Letter to William Roscoe, Letters of Horace Walpole,* vol. IX, p. 454

Spenser wrote all the sonnets which he finally published when he was forty years of age, under the title of *Amoretti,*—Little Loves. The title is good; but compared with what was to be expected of them, these Little Loves—not to speak it irreverently—are rather a set of dull, middle-aged gentlemen, images of the author's time of life, and of the commonplace sufferings which he appears to have undergone from a young and imperious mistress.

Leigh Hunt, 1859?-1867, *An Essay on the Sonnet,* ed. Lee, vol. I, p. 73

The *Amoretti* written in this metre, and undoubtedly representing some, at least, of Spenser's latest written work, rank with the best of Sidney's, and hardly below the best of Shakespere's while both of them and in the earlier sonnets the note of regret mingled with delight—the special Renaissance note—sounds as it rarely does in any other English verse.

George Saintsbury, 1887, *History of Elizabethan Literature,* p. 87

Epithalamion (1595)

Spenser married his Elizabeth, about the year 1593, and he has crowned his amatory effusions with a most impassioned and triumphant epithalamion on his own nuptials, which he concludes with a prophecy, that it shall stand a perpetual monument of his happiness, and thus it has been. The passage in which he describes his youthful bride, is perhaps one of the most beautiful and vivid *pictures* in the whole compass of English poetry.

Anna Brownell Jameson, 1829, *The Loves of the Poets,* vol. I, p. 231

It is a strain redolent of a bridegroom's joy, and of a poet's fancy. The English language seems to expand itself with a copiousness unknown before, while he pours forth the varied imagery of this splendid little poem. I do not know any other nuptial song, ancient or modern, of equal beauty. It is an intoxication of ecstasy, ardent, noble and pure.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe,* pt. ii, ch. v, par. 67

Colin Clouts Come Home Again (1595)

Nature, it is true, contains one secret by no means easily discovered when it has once been obscured; but the poets throw over that secret an almost impenetrable covering of words, figures, and symbols, making the task of discovery infinitely more difficult than Nature left it; not, indeed, the best of the poets, whose representations are so completely artistic, that the sense is never perverted to positively mischievous ends, though the reader may

miss the true sense. In the poem we have had under examination the true sense may be missed by many; but it is an offence only against taste—we mean literary taste. It is merely a sort of childish mistake to imagine that *Colin Clouts* was designed in any manner to refer to Queen Elizabeth, and does no visible injury in the world.

E. A. Hitchcock, 1865, *Colin Clouts Explained,* p. 109

In *Colin Clout,* as a piece from real life the ablest and most interesting poem which Spenser has left us, the place of landscape is filled in high allegorical style by a record of the Loves of the Rivers around his Irish home. But when he has to describe his voyage to England, all the poet awakes, and we have a picture of the sea, and of a vast royal ship of the day, which has never been surpassed in English literature.

Francis Turner Palgrave, 1896, *Landscape in Poetry,* p. 136

Hyms of Love and Beauty (1596)

Spenser's two Hymns to Love and Beauty were the poetical fruits of his University education. These contain little that is original, but show a remarkable power of rendering the current philosophical ideas into clear and flowing verse. Visible things, the poet taught, following the main axiom of his master, are patterns of things invisible. . . . Beauty is not only an image of the Divine Mind, but an informing power in the soul.

W. J. Courthope, 1897, *A History of English Poetry,* vol. II, p. 241

The claim of Spenser to be considered as a sacred poet does by no means rest upon his hymns alone. . . . But whoever will attentively consider *The Fairy Queen* itself will find that it is, almost throughout, such as might have been expected from the author of those truly sacred hymns. It is a continual, deliberate endeavour to enlist the restless intellect and chivalrous feeling, of an inquiring and romantic age, on the side of goodness and faith, of purity and justice. . . . Spenser then was essentially a *sacred* poet; but the delicacy and insinuating gentleness of his disposition were better fitted to the veiled than the direct mode of instruction. . . . To Spenser therefore, upon the whole, the English reader must revert as being pre-eminently the sacred poet of his country.

John Keble, 1825, "Sacred Poetry," *London Quarterly Review,* vol. 32, pp. 225, 228, 231

Mother Hubbard's Tale

In this Poem we have a specimen of Spenser's genius in Satire, a talent he very seldom exercised. This Fable is after the old manner of Chaucer,

of whom it is an excellent imitation; and perhaps the antiquated style has no ill effect in improving the humour of the story: the morality of it is admirable. Every one will observe that keeness of wit, with which he has represented the arts of ill courtiers. In the description of a good courtier, which is so finely set off by the contrary characters, it is believed the author had in his view Sir Philip Sidney, of whom this seems to be a very just as well as beautiful picture.

John Hughes, 1715, ed. *Spenser's Works, with Life*

He who reads, in particular, *Mother Hubbard's Tale* will gain a fair conception of the way in which Chaucer sounded to men of the sixteenth century. There are lines in this piece that lack the proper number of syllables. There are lines that are remarkable for nothing so much as for their lack of harmony. There are entire passages that are throughout written in what would strike us as a lame and halting metre. In a writer whose natural melody is almost cloying in its smoothness and sweetness, such a deviation from his usual practice could not be due to accident. It was the result of design. It was adopted for no other reason than that Chaucer was believed to have furnished the example of this sort of ruggedness in the measure.

Thomas R. Lounsbury, 1891, *Studies in Chaucer,* vol. III, p. 56

A View of the State of Ireland (1596)

In a country-house once belonging to the Desmonds on the banks of the Mulla, near Doneraile, the first three books of *The Faery Queen* were written; and here too the poet awoke to the sad realities of life, and has left us, in his "Account of the State of Ireland," the most full and authentic document that illustrates its condition. This treatise abounds with judicious observations; but we regret the disposition to recommend an extreme severity in dealing with the native Irish, which ill becomes the sweetness of his muse.

Henry Hallam, 1827, *The Constitutional History of England,* vol. II, ch. xviii, par. 3

This state memorial still makes us regret that our poet only wrote verse: there is a charm in his sweet and voluble prose, a virgin grace which we have long lost in the artificial splendor of English diction. Here is no affectation of Chaucerian words: the gold is not spotted with rust. The vivid pictures of the poet, the curiosity of the antiquary, and, above all, a new model of policy of the practical politician, combine in this inestimable tract.

Isaac Disraeli, 1841, "Spenser," *Amenities of Literature*

The author of *The Faery Queen* writes an excellent prose style. It is unaffected, clear, vigorous, straightforward. It exactly suits and serves its purpose. It does not play with words, or cultivate any verbal artifices. It is perfectly simple, and by its very simplicity impressive and forcible. Spenser "only speaks right on." He is too much in earnest to be decorative or florid. He wishes to definitely instruct, and to move in a special direction those whom he addresses, not merely to entertain and please them. But being a great master of expression he accomplishes this latter end also, though it is not his prime object. His well-formed sentences and his trenchant phrases continually remind us that we are listening to an artist born and bred.

John W. Hales, 1893, *English Prose,* ed. Craik, vol. 1, p. 455

General

Spenser may be reckoned the first of our heroic poets. He had a large spirit, a sharp judgment, and a genius for heroic poetry, perhaps above any that ever wrote since Virgil, but our misfortune is, he wanted a true idea, and lost himself by following an unfaithful guide. Tho' besides Homer and Virgil, he had read Tasso, yet he rather suffered himself to be misled by Ariosto, with whom blindly rambling on marvels and adventures, he makes no conscience of probability; all is fanciful and chimerical, without any uniformity, or without any foundation in truth; in a word his poem is perfect Fairy-Land.

Thomas Rymer, 1693, *A Short View of the Tragedy of the Last Age*

With all his faults, no poet enlarges the imagination more than Spenser. Cowley was formed into poetry by reading him; and many of our modern writers, such as Gray, Akenside, and others, seemed to have studied his manner with the utmost attention; from him their compounded epithets, and solemn flow of numbers, seem evidently borrowed; and the verses of Spenser may, perhaps, one day be considered the standard of English poetry.

Oliver Goldsmith, 1759, *Works,* ed. Cunningham

But Spenser I could have read forever. Too young to trouble myself about the allegory, I considered all the knights and ladies and dragons and giants in their outward and exoteric sense; and God only knows how delighted I was to find myself in such society. As I had always a wonderful facility in retaining in my memory whatever verses pleased me, the quantity of Spenser's stanzas which I could repeat was really marvellous.

Sir Walter Scott, 1808, *Autobiography, Ashestiel MS., Lockhart's Life of Scott,* ch. i

But if Spenser's imagination was not comprehensive, precise, and bold, it was fertile, rich, and various. If he was destitute of profound passion and warm sympathy with his kind, he manifests a natural gentleness, a noble sentiment, and an exquisite moral purity, which thoroughly engage our interest and our esteem. The most characteristic quality of his mind is undoubtedly sensibility to beauty. This may account for whatever want of originality there may seem to be in his compositions, and for his dealing so little with real human concerns. Such a susceptibility would lead him to repose, rather than to action; to accept readily traditions of all sorts; to stand aloof from the harsh and vulgar facts of actual life; to linger among the mellow scenes of the past and in the twilight realms of fancy; to dream over the ruins of time, obsolete institutions, and creeds outworn. Most peculiar is the modification which this faculty, combined with moral purity, gives to his love of woman. Voluptuous though this be, it is ever controlled and chastened by a predominant feeling of the beauty of holiness. Spenser's most extraordinary power is that of language, the power of conveying impressions by sounds. It is through the ear more than the eye that he achieves his triumphs, and he makes up by his mastery over this art for many other deficiencies. The pathos of his verse affects us when his sentiments do not. In him more than in any other of our poets do music and sweet poetry agree; one of the arts is complementary to the other, and he produces some of the effects of both. No instrument known before his time was capable of expressing his deep and complex harmonies, and he invented one which many a genius has since touched skilfully, but none with the hand of the master, who, through nearly four thousand stanzas, adapted it to a great variety of subjects and proved it equal to all.

Francis J. Child, 1859, ed. *Poetical Works of Spenser, Memoir,* vol. I, p. lv

Spenser's verse is fluid and rapid, no doubt, but there are more ways than one of being fluid and rapid, and Homer is fluid and rapid in quite another way than Spenser. Spenser's manner is no more Homeric than is the manner of the one modern inheritor of Spenser's beautiful gift; the poet, who evidently caught from Spenser his sweet and easy-slipping movement, and who has exquisitely employed it; a Spenserian genius, nay, a genius by natural endowment richer probably than even Spenser; that light which shines so unexpected and without fellow in our century, an Elizabethan born too late, the early lost and admirably gifted Keats.

Matthew Arnold, 1861, *On Translating Homer,* Lecture iii

Spenser was reproached in his own time with an excess of archaisms; but the real fault of his diction lies rather in the use of forms and expressions

which had become obsolete because they deserved to perish, for which no good authority could be cited, and which were, probably, unauthorized coinages of the inferior poets from whom Spenser took them, or in many cases perhaps licenses of his own. In the employment of words of these classes, he is often far from happy, but in the mastery of the true English of his time, in acute sensibility of ear and exquisite skill in the musical arrangement of words, he has no superior in the whole compass of English literature. . . . The most striking peculiarity of Spenser's diction is analogous to that which I have before mentioned as one of Chaucer's greatest merits—a rare felicity in verbal combinations—and in Spenser it chiefly consists in a very nice sense of congruity in the choice and application of epithets. His adjectives not only qualify the noun, but they are so adapted to it, that they heighten or intensify its appropriate meaning; and they are often used with a reference to the radical sense of the noun, which shows that Spenser knew how to press even etymology into use as a means of the embellishment of poetical diction. *The Faery Queene* is at present more studied, I believe, than it was a century since; but *The Shepherd's Calendar,* which is less familiarly known, is full of most exquisite poetry, and the minor works of Spenser are scarcely less interesting to the reader of taste, and to the philologist, than his great allegorical epic.

George P. Marsh, 1862, *The Origin and History of the English Language,* etc., p. 548

THOMAS NASHE

1567-1600?

Born at Lowestoft(?), 1567; baptized, Nov. 1567. Matric., St. John's Coll., Camb., as Sizar, Oct. 1582; B.A., 1586. Settled in London, 1588; adopted literary career. Took active part in "Martin Mar-Prelate" controversy, under pseud. of "Pasquil." Play, *The Terrors of the Night,* produced, 1593; *Summer's Last Will and Testament,* privately performed, 1593; *The Isle of Dogs,* performed by the Lord Admiral's Company, June 1597. In Fleet Prison, autumn of 1597. Died, 1601. WORKS: *The Anatomie of Absurditie,* 1589; *A Countercuffe given to Martin Junior* (under pseud.: "Pasquil"), 1589; *The Returne of the Renowned Cavalier Pasquil of England* (anon.), 1589; *Martin's Month's Minde* (under pseud.: "Marphoreus"), 1589; *The First Parte of Pasquil's Apologie* (anon.), 1590; *A Wonderful . . . Astrologicall Prognostication* (under pseud.: "Thomas Scarlet"), 1591; *Pierce Pennilesse his Supplication to the Devill,* 1592 (another edn. same year); *Strange Newes of the Intercepting certaine Letters,* 1592; *Christ's Teares over Jerusalem,* 1593; *The Terrors of the Night,* 1594; *The Unfortunate Traveller,* 1594; *The Tragedie of Dido* (with Marlowe), 1594; *Have with you to Saffron Walden,* 1596; *Nashe's Lenten Stuffe,* 1599; *A Pleasant Comedie called Summer's Last Will and Testament,*

1600. He *translated:* Evenkellius Γυμνασιαρχου 1648; and *edited:* Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella,* 1591. COLLECTED WORK: ed. by Grosart (6 vols.), 1883-85.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 210

SEE: *Works,* ed. Ronald B. McKerrow, 1904-10, 5 v.; *The Works of Thomas Nashe: Edited from the Original Texts by Ronald B. McKerrow, with Corrections and Supplementary Notes,* ed. F. P. Wilson, 1958, 5 v.; G. R. Hibbard, *Thomas Nashe,* 1962.

PERSONAL

As Eupolis of Athens used great liberty in taxing the vices of men: so doth Thomas Nash. Witness the brood of the Harveys! As Actæon was worried of his own hounds: so is Tom Nash of his Isle of Dogs. Dogs were the death of Euripedes; but be not disconsolate, gallant young Juvenal! Linus, the son of Apollo died the same death. Yet God forbid that so brave a wit should so basely perish! Thine are but paper dogs, neither is thy banishment like Ovid's eternally to converse with the barbarous Getæ. Therefore comfort thyself, sweet Tom! with Cicero's glorious return to Rome; and with the Counsel Æneas gives to his seabeaten soldiers, Lib. I, Æneid.

Pluck up thine heart! and drive from thence both fear and care away!
To think on this, may pleasure be perhaps another day.
Durato, et temet rebus servato secundis.

Francis Meres, 1598, *Palladis Tamia*

Thou wast, indeed, too slothfull to thy selfe,
Hiding thy better talent in thy Spleene:
True spirits are not covetous of pelfe;
Youth's wit is ever ready, quick and keene.
Thou didst not live thy ripened Autumne day,
But wert cut off in thy best blooming May.
Else hadst thou left, as thou indeed hast left,
Sufficient test, though now in others Chests,
T' improve the basenes of that humorous theft
Which seemes to flow from selfe-conceving Brests.
Thy name they burie, having buried thee:
Drones eat thy Honnie, thou wert the true Bee.

Thomas Middleton, 1604, *The Ant and the Nightingale*

GENERAL

With thee I ioyne young Iuuenall, that byting Satyrist, that lastlie with mee together writ a Comedie. Sweete boy, might I aduise thee, be aduised, and

get not many enemies by bitter words; inueigh against vaine men, for thou canst do it, no man better, no man so wel; thou hast a libertie to reprooue all, and none more; for one being spoken to, all are offended, none being blamed, no man is iniuried. Stop shallow water still running, it will rage, tread on a worme, and it will turne; then blame not schollers vexed with sharpe lines, if they reprooue thy too much libertie of reproofe.

Robert Greene, 1593, *Groatsworth of Wit, Works,* ed. Grosart, vol. xii, p. 143

Besides this boldness of their becoming gods, so far as to set limits to his mercies; there was not only one *Martin Mar-Prelate,* but other venomous books daily printed and dispersed; books that were so absurd and scurrilous, that the graver divines disdained them an answer. And yet these were grown into high esteem with the common people, till Tom Nash appeared against them all; who was a man of a sharp wit, and the master of a scoffing satirical merry pen, which he employed to discover the absurdities of those blind, malicious, senseless pamphlets, and sermons as senseless as they; Nash his answers being like his books, which bore these titles, *An Almond for a Parrot, A Fig for my Godson, Come crack me this Nut,* and the like; so that his merry wit made some sport, and such a discovery of their absurdities, as (which is strange) he put a greater stop to these malicious pamphlets than a much wiser man had been able.

Isaac Walton, 1665, *The Life of Mr. Richard Hooker*

There never perhaps was poured forth such a rushing and roaring torrent of wit, ridicule, and invective, as in the rapid succession of pamphlets which he published in the course of the year 1589 against the Puritans and their famous champion (or rather knot of champions) taking the name of Martin Mar-Prelate; unless in those in which he began two years after to assail poor Gabriel Harvey, his persecution of and controversy with whom lasted a much longer time—till indeed the Archbishop of Canterbury (Whitgift), interfered in 1597 to restore the peace of the realm by an order that all Harvey's and Nash's books should be taken wherever they might be found, "and that none of the said books be ever printed hereafter."

George L. Craik, 1861, *A Compendious History of English Literature, etc.,* vol. I, p. 500

His *Life of Jack Wilton* is well known to have originated one of the most long-lived fables in English literary biography. Altogether he was a most versatile proficient in literary composition; it was said of him that he "compiled a learned treatise in the praise of a red herring"; and in truth, with such a writer, the subject is of secondary importance; the style is the man.

Adolphus William Ward, 1875, *A History of English Dramatic Literature,* vol. I, p. 232

With all his fondness for merry authors, Nash can discern true poetry, and he adores it. If by chance, in the midst of an angry satirical disquisition, the word poetry comes to his pen, he is suddenly transformed, he smiles, he melts; nothing is left in him but human sympathies. . . . His vocabulary is very rich; he has always a variety of words at his disposal and uses often two or three the better to impress our minds with the idea in his own. He coins at need new words or fetches them from classical or foreign languages. He does not do this in an off-hand way, but on purpose and wilfully; he possessed much of that curious care for and delight in words which is one of the characteristics of the men of the Renaissance. To deal with words was in itself a pleasure for them; they liked to mould, to adopt, to combine, to invent them. Word painting delighted them; Nash has an extreme fondness for it, and satirical and comical as he is, he often astonishes us by the poetic gracefulness of his combinations of words. In this as in many other particulars he imitates, *longe sequens,* the master he seems to have admired above others, Rabelais, who, in the tempestuous rolls of his diverse waters, sometimes washes up on to the sand pearls fit to adorn the crown of any lyrical poet.

J. J. Jusserand, 1890, *The English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare,* p. 299

Had there been no inkshed between Nash and Harvey, we should remember Harvey as he was, Nash as he was. Because they vilified each other, many have taken Gabriel Harvey for a ridiculous pedant upon the authority of Thomas Nash, and Thomas Nash for a railer, strong in personal attack, upon the authority of Gabriel Harvey—and of Nash himself in his writing against Harvey. Nash is the chief sufferer, because as an English Writer he had most to lose. He was a young man, with scholarship enough and wit abounding. His invectives against Harvey were in some degree half-playful exercises in pen-duel. They were for the amusement of the public after the manner of the "flytings" of the time of Dunbar and Kennedy, Skelton and Garnische. But they meant mischief, as those flytings did not. They were born of personal offence, and carried on with a real bitterness of feeling. If we could strike out of our literature all the tedious quarrel between Nash and Harvey, where the wit of the younger man and the rhetoric of the elder are much wasted upon matter trivial and low, how would the two stand? We should know Gabriel Harvey only as a respectable friend of some of the best writers of the day, who loved good literature without adding to it; as an affectionate brother who showed sense in discouragement of superstitious notions about earthquakes and conjunctions of the planets; and as chief advocate of an experiment in writing English hexameters, which has its own place and meaning in our literary history. We should have known Thomas Nash as a young wit and poet who cared for good literature and added to it;

as one who wrote prose satire that looked mainly to the higher aims of life, a young Juvenal who struck heavily at the greater vices and more lightly at the follies of his age, without personal attack on any man, except so much as was incident to the general bad taste of the Marprelate controversy. All his other offence of that kind is against the Harveys.

Henry Morley, 1893, *English Writers*, vol. X, p. 191

Nash had ideas of style which sometimes led him into involved pomposity, but which also supplied him with an effective, though blackguard, controversial manner. Nobody was a greater master of loud-mouthed bragging, of the fashion of telling an opponent over pages of repetition of the dreadful things you are going to do with him.

David Hannay, 1898, *The Later Renaissance*, p. 275

JOHN LYLY

1554?-1606

John Lyly, 1554-1606. Born, in Kent, 1554. Student of Magdalen Hall, Oxford, 1569; matric., 8 Oct. 1571; B.A., 27 April 1573; M.A., 1 June 1575. Incorp. M.A., Cambridge, 1579. Settled in London, and engaged in literary work. Wrote plays for Children of the Revels. M.P. for Hindon, Feb. to March 1589; for Aylesbury, Feb. to April 1593; for Appleby, Sept. 1597 to Feb. 1598; for Aylesbury, Oct. to Dec. 1601. Married, 1595(?). Died, in London, Nov. 1606; buried in Church of St. Bartholomew-the-Less, 30 Nov. WORKS: *Euphues*, pt. i, 1579 (2nd edn. same year); pt. ii, 1580 (2nd edn. same year); *Alexander and Campaspe*, 1584 (another edn., called *Campaspe*, same year); *Sapho and Phao* (anon.), 1584; *Pappe with a Hatchet* (anon.), [1589]; *Endimion*, 1591; *Gallathea* (anon.), 1592; *Midas* (anon.), 1592; *Mother Bombie* (anon.), 1594; *The Woman in the Moone*, 1597; *Love's Metamorphosis*, 1601. COLLECTED WORKS: *Six Court Comedies*, 1632; *Dramatic Works*, ed. by F. W. Fairholt (2 vols.), 1858.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors*, p. 176

SEE: *Complete Works*, ed. R. Warwick Bond, 1902, 3v.; J. Dover Wilson, *John Lyly*, 1905; G. K. Hunter, *John Lyly: The Humanist as Courtier*, 1962.

Euphues

A manifest example thereof, may bee the great good grace and sweete vayne, which Eloquence hath attained in our speeche, because it hath had the helpe of such rare and singuler wits, as from time to time myght still adde some amendment to the same. Among whom I thinke there is none

that will gainsay, but Master *Iohn Lilly* hath deserued moste high commendations, as he hath stept one steppe further therein than any either before or since he first began the wyttie discourse of his *Euphues*. Whose workes, surely in respect of his singuler eloquence and braue composition of apt words and sentences, let the learned examine and make tryall thereof thorough all the partes of Rethoricke, in fitte phrases, in pithy sentences, in gallant tropes, in flowing speeche, in plaine sence, and surely in my iudgment, I think he wyll yeelde him that verdict, which *Quintilian* giueth of bothe the best Orators *Demosthenes* and *Tully*, that from the one, nothing may be taken away, to the other, nothing may be added.

William Webbe, 1586, *A Discourse of English Poetrie*, ed. Arber, p. 46

A neat, spruce, affecting courtier, one that wears clothes well and in fashion: practiseth by his glass how to salute; speaks good remnants, notwithstanding the base viol and tobacco: swears tersely, and with variety; cares not what lady's favour he belies, or great man's familiarity: a good property to perfume the boot of a coach. He will borrow another man's horse to praise, and backs him as his own. Or, for a need, on foot can post himself into credit with his merchant, only with the gingle of his spur, and the jerk of his wand.

Ben Jonson, 1599, *Every Man out of His Humour*, Preface

Lillye was a man of great reading, good memory, ready faculty of application and uncommon eloquence; but he ran into a vast excess of allusion: in sentence and conformity of style he seldom speaks directly to the purpose; but is continually carried away by one odd allusion or similie or other (out of natural history,—that yet is fabulous and not true in nature) and that still overborne by more, thick upon the back of one another, and thro' an eternal affectation of sententiousness keeps to such a formal measure of his periods as soon grows tiresome, and so by confining himself to shape, his sense so frequently into one artificial cadence, however ingenious or harmonious, abridges that variety which the style should be admired for.

William Oldys, c. 1761, *MS., note to Langbaine's Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, p. 328

In the romance of *Euphues* there are chiefly three faults, which indeed pervade all the novels of the same school. 1. A constant antithesis, not merely in the ideas, but words, as one more given to *theft* than to *threft*. 2. An absurd affectation of learning, by constant reference to history and mythology. 3. A ridiculous superabundance of similitudes.

John Dunlop, 1814-45, *The History of Fiction*, p. 403

These notable productions were full of pedantic and affected phraseology, (as Whalley truly says), and of high-strained antithesis of thought and expression. Unfortunately they were well received at court, where they did incalculable mischief, by vitiating the taste, corrupting the language, and introducing a spurious and unnatural mode of conversation and action, which all the ridicule in this and the following drama (Ben Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels,* acted in 1600) could not put out of countenance.

William Gifford, 1816, ed. *The Works of Ben Jonson,* vol. II

John Lyly, distinguished both as a dramatist and a poet, laid aside the very tradition of English style for a style modeled on the decadence of Italian prose. Euphuism, as the new fashion has been styled from the prose romance of *Euphues* in which Lyly originated it, is best known to modern readers by the pitiless caricature with which Shakspeare quizzed its pedantry, its affectation, the meaningless monotony of its far-fetched phrase, the absurdity of its extravagant conceits. Its representative, Armado, in *Love's Labor's Lost,* is "a man of fire-new words, fashion's own knight," "that hath a mint of phrases in his brain; one whom the music of his own vain tongue doth ravish like enchanting harmony." But its very extravagance sprang from the general burst of delight in the new resources of thought and language which literature felt to be at its disposal; and the new sense of literary beauty which its affectation, its love of a "mint of phrases" and the "music of its own vain tongue" disclose—the new sense of pleasure in delicacy or grandeur of phrase, in the structure and arrangement of sentences, in what has been termed the atmosphere of words—was a sense out of which style was itself to spring.

John Richard Green, 1874, *A Short History of the English People,* ch. vii, sec. v

Euphues entranced society in the sixteenth century, because our literature, in common with that of Italy and Spain and France, was passing through a phase of affectation, for which Euphuism was the national expression. It corresponded to something in the manners and the modes of thinking which prevailed in Europe at that period. It was the English type of an all but universal disease. There would have been Euphuism, in some form or other, without *Euphues*; just as the so-called æsthetic movement of today might have dispensed with its Bunthorne, and yet have flourished. Lyly had the fortune to become the hero of his epoch's follies, to fix the form of fashionable affectation, and to find the phrases he had coined in his study, current on the lips of gentlemen and ladies.

John Addington Symonds, 1884, *Shakspere's Predecessors in the English Drama,* pp. 502, 505

There is no possibility of error; with Lyly commences in England the literature of the drawing-room, that of which we speak at morning calls, productions which, in spite of vast and many changes, still occupy a favourite place on the little boudoir tables. We must also notice what pains Lyly gives himself to make his innovation a success, and so please his patronesses, and how he ornaments his thoughts and engarlands his speeches, how cunningly he imbues himself with the knowledge of the ancients and of foreigners, and what trouble he gives himself to improve upon the most learned and the most florid of them. His care was not thrown away. He was spoiled, petted, and caressed by the ladies; with an impartial heart they extended to the author the same favour they granted to the book, and to their little dogs. He was proclaimed king of letters by his admirers, and became, in fact, king of the *précieux*. He created a school, and the name of his hero served to baptize a whole literature. This particular form of bad style was called *euphuism*.

J. J. Jusserand, 1890, *The English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare,* p. 105

Dramas

His comedy in prose, *Campaspe,* is a warning example of the impossibility of ever constructing, from anecdotes and epigrammatic sallies, any thing like a dramatic whole. The author was a learned witling, but in no respect a poet.

Augustus William Schlegel, 1809, *Dramatic Art and Literature,* tr. Black, Lecture xiii

Lilly is known in dramatic literature as the author of eight comedies written to be performed at the court of Elizabeth. They are in all respects opposed to the genius of the English drama. They do not even pretend to be representations of human life and human character, but are pure fantasy pieces, in which the personages are a heterogeneous medley of Grecian gods and goddesses, and impossible, colorless creatures with sublunary names, all thinking with one brain, and speaking with one tongue—the conceitful, crotchety brain and the dainty, well-trained tongue of clever, witty John Lilly. They are all in prose, but contain some pretty, fanciful verses called songs, which are as unlyrical in spirit as the plays in which they appear are undramatic. From these plays Shakespeare borrowed a few thoughts; but they exercised no modifying influence upon his genius, nor did they at all conform to that of the English drama, upon which they are a mere grotesque excrescence.

Richard Grant White, 1865, ed. *The Works of William Shakespeare,* "Rise and Progress of the English Drama," vol. I, p. clxxviii

The great dramatist shows traces of his predecessor's influence in the remarkable frequency of the allusions to animals—sometimes of a fabulous nature—which occur in the early plays and poems, as well as in the later works like *Lear* and *Coriolanus*. Moreover, though Shakspere mocked at the artifices of Euphuism, he must have appreciated its incisive force, its lucidity and refinement. These are the qualities which specially distinguish his own colloquial prose, and when we listen to the brilliant sallies of Falstaff or Benedick, Beatrice or Rosalind, we should remember that they have their prelude in the witty dialogue of *Campaspe* or *Endimion*. Lyly too set the fashion which Shakspere followed of introducing lyrics, as a musical relief; and his imaginative type of comedy, with its supernatural framework and allegorical design, pointed the way to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*.

Frederick S. Boas, 1896, *Shakspere and his Predecessors*, p. 73

THOMAS SACKVILLE

EARL OF DORSET
1536-1608

Born, at Buckhurst, Sussex, 1536. Probably educated at Sullington Grammar School. Incumbent of the Chantry at Sullington Church, 1546. Called to Bar at Inner Temple. Married Cicely Baker, 1554. M.P. for Westmoreland, 1558; for East Grinstead, 1559; for Aylesbury, 1563. Tragedy *Gorboduc* (written with Norton), performed in Inner Temple Hall, 1561. Grand Master of Freemasons, 1561-67. Travelled on Continent, 1563-66. Knighted, and created Baron Buckhurst, 8 June 1567. Privy Councillor. Lord Lieutenant of Sussex, 1569. On political missions to France, 1568 and 1571. To Holland, 1587 and 1589; to France, 1591 and 1598. Created M.A., Cambridge, Aug. 1571. Commissioner for Ecclesiastical Causes, 1588. K.G., 24 April 1589. Chancellor of Oxford University, Dec. 1591; incorporated M.A., 6 Jan. 1592. Commissioner of Writs, 1592(?). Lord Treasurer, 1599. Lord High Steward, 1601. Created Earl of Dorset, 13 March 1604. Died suddenly, at Whitehall, 19 April 1608. Buried in Westminster Abbey. WORKS: Contribution to *A Myrroure for Magistrates*, 1559-63; *The Tragedy of Gorboduc* (with Norton), 1565; Verses contributed to Sir T. Hoby's *Courtier*, 1561; and possibly to *A Paradise of Dainty Devices*, 1576. COLLECTED WORKS: ed. by Rev. R. W. Sackville West, 1859.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors*, p. 245

SEE: *A Myrroure for Magistrates*, ed. Lily B. Campbell, 1938-46, 2v.

Personal

He was a very fine Gentleman of person and endowments both of art and nature; but without measure magnificent, till on the turn of his humor, and the allay that his yeares and good counsels had wrought upon those immoderate courses of his youth, and that height of spirit inherent to his House. And then did the Queen, as a most judicious and indulgent Prince, when she saw the man grow stayed and setled, give him her assistance, and advanced him to the Treasurership, where he made amends to his House for his misspent time, both in the increasement of Estate and Honour, which the Queen conferred on him, together with the opportunity to remake himself, and thereby to shew that this was a Childe, that should have a share in her grace, and a taste of her bounty. They much commend his Elocution, but more the excellency of his Pen, for he was a Schollar, and a person of a quick dispatch, (Faculties that yet run in the bloud.) And they say of him, that his Secretaries did little for him by the way of Inditement, wherein they could seldome please him, he was so facete and choice in his phrase and stile.

Sir Robert Naunton, 1630(?), *Fragmenta Regalia,*
ed. Arber, p. 55

It is grievous to think that this splendid genius, who lived to a great age, and was created Earl of Dorset by King James I, afterwards sunk the poet in the coarser character of statesman.

Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges, 1834, *Autobiography,* vol. I, p. 279

Mirror for Magistrates (1559-63)

Then have we the *Mirrour of Magistrates* lately augmented by my friend mayster John Higgins, and penned by the choysest learned wittes, which for the stately-proportioned uaine of the heroick style, and good meetly proportion of uerse may challenge the best of Lydgate, and all our late rhymers.

Edward Hake, 1588, *Touch-Stone of Wittes*

It was designed to form a series of dramatic soliloquies united in one interlude. Sackville, who seems to have planned the scheme, wrote an "Induction," or prologue, and also one of the stories, that of the first Duke of Buckingham. The "Induction" displays best his poetical genius: it is, like much earlier poetry, a representation of allegorical personages, but with a fertility of imagination, vividness of description, and strength of language, which not only leave his predecessors far behind, but may fairly be compared with some of the most poetical passages in Spenser. Sackville's

"Induction" forms a link which unites the school of Chaucer and Lydgate to *The Faery Queen*. It would certainly be vain to look in Chaucer, wherever Chaucer is original, for the grand creations of Sackville's fancy; yet we should never find any one who would rate Sackville above Chaucer. The strength of an eagle is not to be measured only by the height of his place, but by the time that he continues on the wing. Sackville's "Induction" consists of a few hundred lines; and even in these there is a monotony of gloom and sorrow which prevents us from wishing it to be longer.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, pt. ii, ch. v, par. 59

A greater work than *Gorboduc* adorns the memory of Sackville. During the last years of Mary, which might well be called gloomy, were it not for the fiery glare that tinges them red as if with martyrs' blood, he sketched out the design of a great poem, which was to be entitled *The Mirrour of Magistrates*, and was to embrace poetic histories of all the great Englishmen who had suffered remarkable disasters. . . . The "Induction" is a grand pictured allegory, which describes "within the porch and jaws of hell" Remorse, Dread, Revenge, and other terrible things, that are ever gnawing away at the root of our human life. It contains only a few hundred lines, and yet these are enough to place Sackville high on the list of British poets.

William Francis Collier, 1861, *History of English Literature*, p. 133

Gorboduc (Or *Ferrex and Porrex* 1565)

Gorboduc is a fable, doubtless better turned for tragedy than any on this side the Alps in his time; and might have been a better direction to Shakespeare and Ben Jonson than any guide they have had the luck to follow.

Thomas Rymer, 1693, *A Short View of Tragedy of the Last Age*, p. 84

Yet it must be granted that the language of *Gorboduc* has great purity and perspicuity; and that it is entirely free from that tumid phraseology which does not seem to have taken place till playwriting had become a trade, and our poets found it their interest to captivate the multitude by the false sublime, and by those exaggerated imageries and pedantic metaphors, which are the chief blemishes of the scenes of Shakespeare, and which are at this day mistaken for his capital beauties by too many readers. Here also we perceive another and a strong reason why this play was never popular.

Thomas Warton, 1778-81, *History of English Poetry*, sec. lvi

Nothing can be more spiritless and inanimate, nor more drawling and monotonous in the tone of the language and in the versification, than this

Ferrex and Porrex, and although the unities of place and time are in no manner observed, and a number of events are crowded into it, yet the scene is wholly destitute of movement: all that happens is previously announced in endless consultations, and afterwards stated in equally endless narratives.

Augustus William Schlegel, 1809, *Dramatic Art and Literature,* tr. Black, Lecture XIII

Gorboduc is Senecan to the core, and judged from this standard it has very real merits. Its theme is serious, and of tragic significance; the treatment is dignified and, from the special point of view, adequate; there is no lack (to use Sidney's words) of "stately speeches and well-sounding phrases, climbing to the height of Seneca his style." As a fact, it is in the language rather than in the matter that the main interest of the play lies. . . . The verse of *Gorboduc,* though not without vigour in parts, is monotonous and stiff, but it had in it, far beyond the conception of those who first used it, infinite possibilities. They had thought of it as a pale replica of classical measures: it was really destined to an existence in the world of arts as independent, as glorious, as immortal as theirs. To have discovered the fitness of blank verse for high dramatic purposes is the distinctive achievement of the English classical playwrights.

Frederick S. Boas, 1896, *Shakspere and his Predecessors,* pp. 24, 25

SIR THOMAS OVERBURY
1581-1613

Statesman and author; born at Ilmington, Warrickshire, England, in 1581; educated at Queen's College, Oxford, and graduated 1598; traveled on the Continent; became a resident of Edinburgh 1601, where he was an intimate friend of Robert Carr, afterwards Viscount Rochester and Earl of Somerset; was knighted 1608; traveled on the Continent 1609; wrote *Observations upon the State of the Seventeen United Provinces*; incurred the enmity of his former friend, Lord Rochester, and of the Countess of Essex, by his opposition to their criminal intrigues; refused a foreign mission offered him as a means of removing him from the kingdom, and was thereupon thrown into the Tower, where he was cruelly treated, and died Sept. 15, 1613. In 1619 Lord Rochester, then Earl of Somerset, and his countess were convicted of having poisoned Overbury. His popular volume of *Characters* was published posthumously in 1614.

Rev. Henry A. Beers, 1897, *Johnson's Universal Cyclopædia,* vol. VI, p. 371

See: *The Overburian Characters,* ed. W. D. Paylor, 1936; Benjamin Boyce, *The Polemic Character, 1640-1661,* 1955.

Bred in Oxford, and attained to be a most accomplished Gentleman, which the happiness of his Pen, both in Poetry and Prose, doth declare. In the latter he was the first writer of Characters of our Nation, so far as I have observed. But, if the great parts of this Gentleman were guilty of insolency and petulancy, which some since have charged on his memory; we may charitably presume that his reduced age would have corrected such juvenile extravagancies. It is questionable whether Robert Carre, Earl of Somerset, were more in the favour of King James, or this Sir Thomas Overbury in the favour of the Earl of Somerset, until he lost it by disswading that Lord from keeping company with a Lady (the Wife of another Person of Honour), as neither for his credit here, or comfort hereafter.

Thomas Fuller, 1662, *The Worthies of England*, ed. Nichols, vol. 1, p. 385

Sir Thomas was about 32 years old when he was murthered, and is said to have possessed an accuteness, and strength of parts that was astonishing; and some have related that he was proud of his abilities, and over-bearing in company; but as there is no good authority for the assertion, it is more agreeable to candour to believe him the amiable knight Winstanley draws him; as it seldom happens that a soul formed for the noble quality of friendship is haughty and insolent. There is a tragedy of Sir Thomas Overbury wrote by the late Richard Savage, son of earl Rivers, which was acted in 1723, (by what was then usually called The Summer Company) with success.

Theophilus Cibber, 1753, *Lives of the Poets*, vol. I, p. 119

His *Characters, or Witty Descriptions of the Properities of Sundry Persons*, is a work of considerable merit; but unfortunately his prose, as well as his verse, has a dryness and quaintness that seem to oppress the natural movement of his thoughts. As a poet, he has few imposing attractions: his beauties must be fetched by repeated perusal. They are those of solid reflection, predominating over, but not extinguishing, sensibility; and there is danger of the reader neglecting, under the coldness and ruggedness of his manner, the manly but unostentatious moral feeling that is conveyed in his maxims, which are sterling and liberal, if we can only pardon a few obsolete ideas on female education.

Thomas Campbell, 1819, *Specimens of the British Poets*

Sir Thomas Overbury's *Characters* are interesting illustrations of contemporary manners, and a mine of foot-notes to the works of better men,—but, with the exception of "The Fair and Happy Milkmaid," they are dull

enough to have pleased James the First; his "Wife" is a *cento* of far-fetched conceits,—here a tomtit, and there a hen mistaken for a pheasant, like the contents of a cockney's game-bag, and his chief interest for us lies in his having been mixed up with an inexplicable tragedy and poisoned in the Tower, not without suspicion of royal complicity.

James Russell Lowell, 1858-64-90, *Library of Old Authors, Prose Works,* Riverside ed., vol. I, p. 252

Overbury was widely popular in his day. His spirit kindled kindred spirits. His originality of tone and treatment; his graphic delineation; the Dutch-like pictures, the neat sentences pointed to an apophthegm, or rounded with a witticism, found the truest test that admiration can take, that of imitation. But in after years the tide of popularity quite turned. Even those authors who delight in the quaint beauty and the picturesque prose of our old writers, seem to have no knowledge of him. Johnson preserves an ominous silence when we mention the author of "the unmatcht Poeme, the Wife." Of all the lovers of character and the sweet old prose, Charles Lamb, who was charmed with Kit Marlowe's luscious smoothness, "beds of roses, buckles of gold" style, knows not our author by name; and among De Quincey's curious essays, and more curious footnotes, we have in vain searched for evidence that he knew of him. Even Macaulay does not make mention of his name or his writings. Others are acquainted with Overbury only to deprecate him; stately Hallam pats the knight with a mild reference, and dismisses his characters with a Gerard Dow comparison. He appears to us to deserve a better fate, and his "characters" live before us in a very real manner. Country and domestic life, courtier life, the duns, the whims and fashions of contemporary manners, are etched in his pages with poetic imagery, a rare if sometimes coarse skill, and a graphic veracity which make them still worthy of notice, and may reward the reader who loves characteristic bits of old manners set in quaintly vivid phraseology.

James Purves, 1880, "Overbury's Characters," *Fraser's Magazine,* vol. 22, p. 376

Overbury's chief work, *A Wife now the Widdow of Sir T. Overburye,* a sensible little poem on marriage, of slender poetic merit, was first published in London in 1614. It was licensed for the press on 13 Dec. 1613, and became exceptionally popular, five editions appearing in 1614. One of the last lines—

He comes too near who comes to be denied,—

obtained currency as a proverb. Contemporary imitations abounded.

Sidney Lee, 1895, *Dictionary of National Biography,* vol. XLII, p. 381

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
1564-1616

William Shakespeare, 1564-1616. Born, at Stratford-on-Avon, 22 or 23 April 1564. Educated at Stratford Grammar School, 1571-77(?). Perhaps apprenticed to his father (a butcher), 1577. Married Ann Hathaway, 1582. To London, 1586; acted, and wrote for stage. Plays probably written between 1591 and 1611. Bought New Place, Stratford, May 1597. Bought a house in Blackfriars, 1613. Died, at Stratford-on-Avon, 23 April 1616. Buried in Stratford Church. WORKS: The following are known to have been printed in Shakespeare's lifetime: *Venus and Adonis,* 1593; *Lucrece,* 1594; *Richard III,* 1597; *Richard II,* 1597; *Romeo and Juliet,* 1597; *Henry IV, Pt. I,* 1598; *Love's Labour's Lost,* 1598; *Henry V,* 1600; *Midsummer Night's Dream,* 1600; *Merchant of Venice,* 1600; *Henry IV, Pt. II,* 1600; *Much Ado about Nothing,* 1600; *Titus Andronicus,* 1600; *Merry Wives of Windsor,* 1602; *Hamlet,* 1603; *King Lear,* 1608; *Sonnets,* 1609; *Troilus and Cressida,* 1609. His *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies,* ed. by J. Heminge and H. Condell, was first published in 1623; his *Works,* ed. by N. Rowe, (7 vols.), 1709-10.*

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 253

SEE: *Variorum Edition,* ed. F. J. Furnivall and others, 1871- ; *Plays and Poems in Quarto,* ed. F. J. Furnivall and others, 1880-91, 43 v. (Facsimiles); *Works,* ed. W. J. Craig, 1891 (OSA); *The Yale Shakespeare,* ed. Wilbur L. Cross, C. F. Tucker Brooke and others, 1918-28, 40 v.; *Complete Plays and Poems,* ed. William Allan Neilson and Charles Jarvis Hill, 1942; *The New Arden Shakespeare,* ed. Una Ellis-Fermor and others, 1951-64, 39 v.; E. K. Chambers, *Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems,* 1930, 2 v., 1933 (one volume abridgement by Charles Williams); Alfred Harbage, *A Reader's Guide to Shakespeare,* 1963; Louis Marder, ed., *His Exits and Entrances: The Story of Shakespeare's Reputation,* 1963; Paul N. Siegel, ed., *His Infinite Variety,* 1963; Gordon Ross Smith, *A Classified Shakespeare Bibliography, 1936-1958,* 1963; John Dover Wilson, *Introduction to the Sonnets of Shakespeare,* 1964; also see annual bibliographies in *Shakespeare Quarterly* and *Shakespeare Survey.*

PERSONAL

GOOD FREND FOR IESVS SAKE FORBEARE,
TO DIGG THE DVST ENCLOASED HEARE:
E T
BLESTE BE Y MAN Y SPARES THES STONES,
T
AND CVRST BE HE Y MOVES MY BONES.

Inscription on the Tablet over Shakespeare's Grave, April 25, 1616

*Dates listed in Sharp's paragraph have not been altered. However, dates of composition represented by modern scholarship have been listed in the sections that examine plays and poems separately.

Base minded men al three of you, if by my miserie ye be not warned: for unto none of you (like me) sought those burres to cleave: those Puppits (I meane) that speake from our mouths, those Anticks garnisht in our colours. Is it not strange that I, to whom they al have beene beholding: is it not like that you, to whome they all have beene beholding, shall (were ye in that case that I am now) be both at once of them forsaken? Yes, trust them not: for there is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hide,* supposes he is as well able to bumbast out a blanke verse as the best of you: and being an absolute *Johannes fac totum,* is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrie. O that I might intreate your rare wits to be imployed in more profitable courses: & let these Apes imitate your past excellence, and never more acquaint them with your admired inventions. I know the best husband of you all will never prove an usurer and the kindest of them all wil never proove a kinde nurse: yet, whilst you may, seeke you better Maisters; for it is pittie men of such rare wits, should be subject to the pleasures of such rude groomes.

Robert Greene, 1592, *A Groats-worth of Wit*

About three moneths since died M. Robert Greene, leaving many papers in sundry Booke sellers hands, among other his Groats-worth of wit, in which, a letter written to diuers playmakers, is offensiuely by one or two of them taken, and because on the dead they cannot be auenged, they wilfully forge in their conceites a liuing author: and after tossing it to and fro, no remedy, but it must light on me. . . . With neither* of them that take offence was I acquainted, and with one† of them I care not if I neuer be: the other‡, of whom at that time I did not so much spare, as since I wish I had, for that as I haue moderated the heate of liuing writers, and might haue vsed my owne discretion (especially in such a case) the author being dead, that I did not, I am as sory, as if the originall fault had beene my fault, because myselfe haue seene his demeanor no lesse ciuill than he exclent in the qualitie he professes: besides, diuers of worship haue reported his vprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writting, that aprooues his art.

Henry Chettle, 1592, *Kind-Hart's Dreame,* ed. Rimbault, Preface, p. iv

This Figure, that thou here seest put,
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut;
Wherein the Graver had a strife
With Nature, to out-doo the life:

*Marlowe and Shakespeare.
†Marlowe.
‡Shakespeare.

O, could he but have drawne his Wit
As well in Brasse, as he hath hit
His Face; the Print would then surpasse
All, that was ever write in Brasse.
But, since he cannot, Reader, looke
Not on his Picture, but his Booke.

B(en) J(onson), 1623, *Facing Droeshout's portrait of Shakespeare prefixed to the First Folio Edition of his Works*

Shakspear had but two daughters, one whereof Mr. Hall, the physitian, married, and by her had on daughter married, to wit, the Lady Bernard of Abbingdon. I have heard that Mr. Shakspeare was a natural wit, without any art at all; hee frequented the plays all his younger time, but in his elder days lived at Stratford, and supplied the stage with two plays every year, and for itt had an allowance so large, that hee spent att the rate of 1,000*l.* a-year, as I have heard. Shakespeare, Drayton, and Ben Jonson, had a merie meeting, and itt seems drank too hard, for Shakespear died of a feavour there contracted. Remember to peruse Shakespeare's plays, and bee much versed in them, that I may not bee ignorant in that matter. Whether Dr. Heylin does well, in reckoning up the dramatick poets which have been famous in England, to omit Shakespeare.

Rev. John Ward, 1648-78, *Diary*, ed. Severn, p. 183

Mr. William Shakespear was borne at Stratford upon Avon in the county of Warwick. His father was a butcher, and I have been told heretofore by some of the neighbours, that when he was a boy he exercised his father's trade, but when he kill'd a calfe he would doe it in a high style, and make a speech. There was at that time another butcher's son in this towne that was held not at all inferior to him for a naturall witt, his acquaintance and coetanean, but dyed young. This William being inclined naturally to poetry and acting, came to London, I guesse, about 18; and was an actor at one of the playhouses, and did act exceedingly well (now B. Johnson was never a good actor, but an excellent instructor). He began early to make essayes at dramatique poetry, which at that time was very lowe; and his playes tooke well. He was a handsome, well-shap't man: very good company, and of a very readie and pleasant smooth witt.

John Aubrey, 1669-96, *Brief Lives*, ed. Clark, vol. II, p. 225

He had, by a misfortune common enough to young fellows, fallen into ill company, and, amongst them, some that made a frequent practice of deer-stealing, engaged him more than once in robbing a park that belonged

to Sir Thomas Lucy, of Charlecote, near Stratford. For this he was prosecuted by that gentleman, as he thought, somewhat too severely; and, in order to revenge that ill usage, he made a ballad upon him. And though this, probably the first essay of his poetry, be lost, yet it is said to have been so very bitter, that it redoubled the prosecution against him to that degree, that he was obliged to leave his business and family in Warwickshire, for some time, and shelter himself in London.

Nicholas Rowe, 1709, *Some Account of the Life of William Shakespeare*

The tomb of Shakspeare is in the chancel. The place is solemn and sepulchral. Tall elms wave before the pointed windows, and the Avon, which runs at a short distance from the walls, keeps up a low perpetual murmur. A flat stone marks the spot where the bard is buried. There are four lines inscribed on it, said to have been written by himself, and which have in them something extremely awful. If they are indeed his own, they show that solicitude about the quiet of the grave, which seems natural to fine sensibilities and thoughtful minds. . . . As I crossed the bridge over the Avon on my return, I paused to contemplate the distant church in which the poet lies buried, and could not but exult in the malediction, which has kept his ashes undisturbed in its quiet and hallowed vaults. What honor could his name have derived from being mingled in dusty companionship with the epitaphs and escutcheons and venal eulogiums of a titled multitude? What would a crowded corner in Westminster Abbey have been, compared with this reverend pile, which seems to stand in beautiful loneliness as his sole mausoleum!

Washington Irving, 1819-48, "Stratford-On-Avon," *Sketch Book*

I can vouch for the following form, all taken from writings of nearly the poet's own age. . . . Schaksper, Schakesper, Schakespeyr, Shagspere, Shaxper, Shaxpere, Shaxpeare, Shaxsper, Shaxspere, Shaxespere, Shakspere, Shakspear, Shakspeere, Shackspeare, Shackespeare, Shakespere, Shakspeyr, Shakesper, Shakespere, Shakeseper, Shakyspere, Shakespire, Shakespeire, Shakespear, Shakaspeare. They are all manifestly of the same type; and to these varieties others might be added. In two instances I have met with the name written *Saxpere*. . . .

Shakespeare or Shakespear kept its ground as the received and proper orthography of the poet's name till the time of the two very eminent commentators Steevens and Malone. . . . A contemporary critic of inferior note in 1795 introduced another variation. In his hands the name became *Shakspere*, with the object, no doubt, of bringing back the orthography to

the form in which the name is said to be found traced by the poet's own hand in his will and in other writings.

Joseph Hunter, 1845, *New Illustrations of the Life, Studies, and Writings of Shakespeare,* vol. I, pp. 4, 5

The manner of his death is uncertain. His will, still preserved in the Prerogative Office, is dated March 25, 1616. The poet's handwriting, never very good, if we may judge from the few signatures that have been preserved, and fifty years more antiquated than that of Sir Thomas Lucy, is feeble, shaky, and imperfect; very little like what might have been expected from one whose practice in writing must have been considerable, and who had in his time filled many reams of manuscript. His death did not occur until the 23rd of April following. It would seem, therefore, that his death was far from sudden; and this alone would suffice to invalidate the tradition, circulated forty-five years after, that the poet died of a fever contracted at a merry meeting with Drayton and Ben Jonson. His bust in Stratford Church, his portrait by Droeshout prefixed to the first folio edition of his works, and the whole tenour of his life, contradict altogether the supposition that the poet was intemperate. If the opinion of competent judges may be taken, the bust was executed from a cast taken after death. It was certainly coloured after life, and until it was painted over by Malone—a greater crime to Shakspeare's memory than Mr. Gaskill's destruction of the famous mulberry tree—it represented the poet exactly as he appeared to his contemporaries. The eyes were a bright hazel, the hair and beard auburn; the doublet was scarlet, covered with a loose black sleeveless gown. As in Droeshout's portrait, the forehead is remarkably high and broad; in fact, the immense volume of the forehead is its most striking feature. The predominant characteristic of the whole is that of a composed, self-possessed, resolute, and vigorous Englishman, of a higher intellectual stamp than usual, but not so far removed from the general national type as we should have been inclined to expect from his writings.

J. S. Brewer, 1871-81, *English Studies,* ed. Wace, p. 235

The Birthplace, as it is called, is a cottage of plaster and timber, two stories in height, with dormer windows, and a pleasant garden in the rear —all that remains of a considerable piece of land. It stands upon the street, and the visitor passes at once, through a little porch, into a low room, ceiled with black oak, paved with flags, and with a fireplace so wide that one sees at a glance what the chimney-corner once meant of comfort and cheer. On those seats, looking into the glowing fire, the imagination of a boy could hardly fail to kindle. A dark and narrow stair leads to the little bare room on the floor above in which Shakespeare was prob-

ably born. The place seems fitted, by its very simplicity, to serve as the starting-point for so great a career. There is a small fireplace; the low ceiling is within reach of the hand; on the narrow panes of glass which fill the casement names and initials are traced in irregular profusion. This room has been a place eagerly sought by literary pilgrims since the beginning of the century. The low ceiling and the walls were covered, in the early part of the century, with innumerable autographs. In 1820 the occupant, a woman who attached great importance to the privilege of showing the house to visitors, was compelled to give up that privilege, and, by way of revenge, removed the furniture and whitewashed the walls of the house. A part of the wall of the upper room escaped the sacrilegious hand of the jealous custodian, and names running back to the third decade of the last century are still to be found there. Other and perhaps more famous names have taken the places of those which were erased, and the walls are now a mass of hieroglyphs. Scott, Byron, Rogers, Tennyson, Thackeray, Dickens, have left this record of their interest in the room. No new names are now written on these blackened walls; the names of visitors are kept in a recordbook on the lower floor.

Hamilton Wright Mabie, 1900, *William Shakespeare, Poet, Dramatist, and Man,* p. 35

Venus and Adonis (1585-87-1593; 1592-93)*

TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE
HENRY WRIOTHESLY
EARL OF SOUTHAMPTON, AND BARON OF TICHFIELD

Right Honourable,

I know not how I shall offend in dedicating my unpolished lines to your lordship, nor how the world will censure me for choosing so strong a prop to support so weak a burden: only, if your honour seem but pleased, I account myself highly praised, and vow to take advantage of all idle hours, till I have honoured you with some graver labour. But if the first heir of my invention proved deformed, I shall be sorry it had so noble a god-father, and never after ear so barren a land, for fear it yield me still so bad a harvest. I leave it to your honourable survey, and your honour to your heart's content; which I wish may always answer your own wish, and the world's hopeful expectation.

Your honour's in all duty,

William Shakespeare, 1593, *Dedication*

*The first dates printed are those in the original Moulton edition; when different dates follow, these represent the consensus of modern scholarship.

In *Venus and Adonis,* the poet, absolutely carried away by the voluptuous power of his subject, seems entirely to have lost sight of its mythological wealth. Venus, stripped of the prestige of divinity, is nothing but a beautiful courtesan, endeavouring unsuccessfully, by all the prayers, tears, and artifices of love, to stimulate the languid desires of a cold and disdainful youth. Hence arises a monotony which is not redeemed by the simple gracefulness and poetic merit of many passages, and which is augmented by the division of the poem into stanzas of six lines, the last two of which almost invariably present a *jeu d'esprit.* But a metre singularly free from irregularities, a cadence full of harmony, and a versification which had never before been equaled in England.

François Pierre Guillaume Guizot, 1821-52, *Shakespeare and His Times,* p. 63

There were already many tuneful singers in 1593; but none of them except the master himself could raise such a pageant of voluptuous imagery, or accompany it with such a symphony of harmonious sound, as we find in *Venus and Adonis.* No one except Spenser and Sackville evoked the rhyme-clangour of the stanza with such delicate art; no one except these two had portrayed such vivid pictures as the arrest of Adonis by Venus, the captivity of Mars, the portrait of herself by the goddess, the escape of the courser, the description of the boar and of the hare-hunt, the solitary night, the discovery of the foolish youth who has fled from Love's arms to those of Death. But while none, save these, of men living had done, or could have done, such work, there was much here which—whether either could have done it or not—neither had done.

George Saintsbury, 1898, *A Short History of English Literature,* p. 317

In *Venus and Adonis* glows the whole fresh sensuousness of the Renaissance and of Shakespeare's youth. It is an entirely erotic poem, and contemporaries aver that it lay on the table of every light woman in London. The conduct of the poem presents a series of opportunities and pretexts for voluptuous situations and descriptions. The ineffectual blandishments lavished by Venus on the chaste and frigid youth, who, in his sheer boyishness, is as irresponsive as a bashful woman—her kisses, caresses, and embraces, are depicted in detail. It is as though a Titian or Rubens had painted a model in a whole series of tender situations, now in one attitude, now in another. Then comes the suggestive scene in which Adonis's horse breaks away in order to meet the challenge of a mare which happens to wander by, together with the goddess's comments thereupon. Then new advances and solicitations, almost inadmissibly daring,

according to the taste of our day. An element of feeling is introduced in the portrayal of Venus's anguish when Adonis expresses his intention of hunting the boar. But it is to sheer description that the poet chiefly devotes himself—description of the charging boar, description of the fair young body bathed in blood, and so forth. There is a fire and rapture of colour in it all, as in a picture by some Italian master of a hundred years before. Quite unmistakable is the insinuating, luscious, almost saccharine quality of the writing, which accounts for the fact that, when his immediate contemporaries speak of Shakespeare's diction, honey is the similitude that first suggests itself to them. John Weever, in 1595, calls him "honey-tongued," and in 1598 Francis Meres uses the same term, with the addition of "mellifluous."

Georg Brandes, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study*, vol. I, p. 68

The Rape of Lucrece (1594; 1593-94)*

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
HENRY WRIOTHESLY,
EARL OF SOUTHAMPTON, AND BARON OF TICHFIELD.

The love I dedicate to your lordship is without end; whereof this pamphlet, without beginning, is but a superfluous moiety. The warrant I have of your honourable disposition, not the worth of my untutored lines, makes it assured of acceptance. What I have done is yours; what I have to do is yours; being part in all I have, devoted yours. Were my worth greater, my duty would show greater; mean time, as it is, it is bound to your lordship, to whom I wish long life, still lengthened with all happiness.

Your Lordship's in all duty,

William Shakespeare, 1594, *Dedication*

And Shakespeare, thou, whose hony flowing vaine,
(Pleasing the World) thy Praises doth containe;
Whose Venus, and whose Lucrece (sweet, and chast)
Thy name in Fame's immortall Booke have plac't.
Live ever you, at least in Fame live ever:
Well may the Body die, but Fame die never.

Richard Barnfield, 1605, *Remembrance of some English Poets*

The two poems of Venus and Adonis and of Tarquin and Lucrece appear to us like a couple of ice-houses. They are about as hard, as glittering, and

*See note on page 181.

as cold. The author seems all the time to be thinking of his verses, and not of his subject—not of what his characters would feel, but of what he shall say; and as it must happen in all such cases, he always puts into their mouths those things which they would be the last to think of, and which it shows the greatest ingenuity in him to find out. The whole is laboured, uphill work. The poet is perpetually singling out the difficulties of the art to make an exhibition of his strength and skill in wrestling with them. He is making perpetual trials of them as if his mastery over them were doubted. . . . A beautiful thought is sure to be lost in an endless commentary upon it. . . . There is, besides, a strange attempt to substitute the language of painting for that of poetry, to make us *see* their feelings in the faces of the persons.

William Hazlitt, 1817-69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, p. 244

The action is retarded by all manner of pretty ingenuities. Lucrece in her agony delivers *tirades* on Night, on Time, on Opportunity, as if they were theses for a degree in some academy of wit. Still the effect on a reader in the right mood is not that of frigid cleverness; the faults are faults of youth; the poet's pleasurable excitement can be perceived; nay at times we feel the energetic fervour of his heart. Now and again the poetry surprises, not by singularity, but as Keats has said that poetry ought to surprise, by a fine excess; sometimes a line is all gold seven times refined; and there is throughout such evidence of a rich, abounding nature in the writer that we are happy with him even while we recognize the idle errors of his nonage.

Edward Dowden, 1880, *English Poets*, ed. Ward, vol. I, p. 437

If the *Venus* be a pageant of gesture, the *Lucrece* is a drama of emotion. You have the same wealth of imagery, but the images are no longer sunlit and sharply defined. They seem, rather, created by the reflex action of a sleepless brain—as it were fantastic symbols shaped from the lying report of tired eyes staring into darkness; and they are no longer used to decorate the outward play of natural desire and reluctance, but to project the shadows of abnormal passion and acute mental distress.

George Wyndham, 1898, ed. *The Poems of Shakespeare*, Introduction, p. xcv

Sonnets (1592-1602-1609)

SHAKE-SPEARES | Sonnets. | Neuer before Imprinted. | AT LONDON | By *G Eld* for *T. T.* and are | to be solde by *William Aspley*. | 1609.

Title Page of First Separate Edition, 1609

TO THE ONLIE BEGETTER OF
THESE INSVING SONNETS
MR. W. H. ALL HAPPINESSE
AND THAT ETERNITIE
PROMISED
BY
OVR EVER-LIVING POET
WISHETH
THE WELL-WISHING
ADVENTURER IN
SETTING
FORTH

T. T.

Dedication of First Edition, 1609

They rise, indeed, in estimation, as we attentively read and reflect upon them; for I do not think that at first they give us much pleasure. No one ever entered more fully than Shakspeare into the character of this species of poetry, which admits of no expletive imagery, no merely ornamental line. . . . It is impossible not to wish that Shakspeare had never written them. There is a weakness and folly in all excessive and misplaced affection which is not redeemed by the touches of nobler sentiments that abound in this long series of sonnets. But there are also faults of a merely cricital nature. The obscurity is often such as only conjecture can penetrate; the strain of tenderness and adoration would be too monotonous, were it less unpleasing; and so many frigid conceits are scattered around, that we might almost fancy the poet to have written without genuine emotion, did not such a host of other passages attest the contrary.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe,* vol. III, pt. iii, ch. v, par. 48, 50

We may look upon the Sonnets as a piece of music, or as Shakspere's pathetic sonata, each melody introduced, dropped again, brought in again with variations, but one full strain of undying love and friendship through the whole. . . . In the Sonnets we have the gentle Will, the melancholy mild-eyed man, of the Droeshout portrait. Shakspere's tender, sensitive, refined nature is seen clearly here, but through a glass darkly in the plays. . . . Still I think it is plain that Shakspere had become involved in an intrigue with a married woman, who threw him over for his friend Will. She was dark, had beautiful eyes, and was a fine musician, but false. . . . Sad as it may be to us to be forced to conclude that shame has to be cast on the noble name we reverence, yet let us remember that it is but for a temporary stain on his career, and that through the knowledge of the

human heart he gained by his own trials we get the intensest and most valuable records of his genius. It is only those who have been through the mill themselves, that know how hard God's stones and the devil's grind.

Frederick James Furnivall, 1877, ed. *The Leopold Shakspere*

For our own part, we find it as difficult to believe that some of the Sonnets are autobiographical as that others are not; and all that has been written to prove that 1-126 are all addressed to the same person fails to convince us. It is clear enough that certain sets (like 1-17, for instance) form a regular series, but that all the poems are arranged in the order in which Shakespeare meant to have them is not so clear. There is no evidence that the edition of 1609 was supervised or even authorized by him. The enigmatical dedication is not his, but the publisher's; and the arrangement of the poems is probably that of the person who procured them for publication, whoever he may have been. The order seems to us more like that of a *collector*—one who knew something of their history, and was interested in getting them together for publication than that of the *author*. Possibly this collector had his own little theory as to the interconnection of some of them, like certain of the modern editors, no one of whom seems on the whole to have been any more successful in classifying them. We fear that both their order and the means by which the publisher got possession of them must continue to be among the insoluble problems of literature.

William J. Rolfe, 1883-90, ed. *Shakespeare's Sonnets,* Introduction, p. 11

In literary value Shakespeare's sonnets are notably unequal. Many reach levels of lyric melody and meditative energy that are hardly to be matched elsewhere in poetry. The best examples are charged with the mellowed sweetness of rhythm and metre, the depth of thought and feeling, the vividness of imagery and the stimulating fervour of expression which are the finest proofs of poetic power. On the other hand, many sink almost into inanity beneath the burden of quibbles and conceits. In both their excellences and their defects Shakespeare's sonnets betray near kinship to his early dramatic work, in which passages of the highest poetic temper at times alternate with unimpressive displays of verbal jugglery.

Sidney Lee, 1898, *A Life of William Shakespeare,* p. 87

Every person of culture who reads the Sonnets nowadays is pleased to find in most of them fertility of thought, beauty of imagery, and mellifluous versification, but having read them he is at a loss to know precisely what

they are all about. Are they, he asks himself, a continuous poem, or so many isolated poems? Are they autobiographical or dramatic; or are they poems at all in the proper sense, and not enigmas, concealing under a poetic garb some deep and occult philosophy? Each of these questions has been answered affirmatively and negatively with equal zeal and ingenuity. In the complete editions of Shakespeare's *Works* the editors have tried their hands at solving the several difficulties, but not with much success; and bulky volumes have been prepared to prove various theories as to their design and significance, which carry no conviction with them beyond the immediate circle of authorship. These differences of opinion are largely due to a certain obscurity in the Sonnets themselves. . . . They allude to situations that have now passed entirely out of memory; they indulge in conceits and plays upon words which rather perplex than help the undertsanding of them; and often they admit locutions, which, if not wholly obsolete, are yet very different from our accepted forms. Indeed, in reading them, it sometimes happens that we come upon passages which at first seem clear and intelligible, but which on closer scrutiny, like the face of a dumb man, get indefinite and vague.

Parke Godwin, 1900, *A New Study of the Sonnets of Shakespeare, pp. 4, 6*

The Passionate Pilgrim

THE | PASSIONATE | Pilgrime | *By W. Shakespeare.* | AT LONDON | Printed for W. Iaggard, and are | to be sold by W. Leake, at the Grey- | hound in Paules Church-yard. | 1599.

Title Page of First Edition, 1599

Here likewise, I must necessarily insert a manifest injury done me in that worke, by taking the two Epistles of *Paris* to *Helen,* and *Helen* to *Paris,* and printing them in a lesse volume, under the name of another, which may put the world in opinion I might steale them from him; and hee to doe himselfe right, hath since published them in his owne name: but as I must acknowledge my lines not worthy his patronage, under whom he hath publisht them, so the Author I know much offended with M. *Jaggard* that (altogether unknowne to him) presumed to make so bold with his name.

Thomas Heywood, 1612, *An Apology for Actors, Epistle*

In *The Passionate Pilgrim,* some critics find difficulty in tracing the hand of the poet; and we accidentally discover by the complaint of Heywood, a congenial dramatist, that there were two of his poems in one edition

of this collection; and we know that there were also other poems by Marlowe and Barnefield and others. Heywood tells us that Shakespeare was greatly offended at this licentious use of his name; but he must have been imperturbably careless on such matters, otherwise he would not have suffered three editions of this spurious miscellany.

Isaac Disraeli, 1841, "Shakespeare," *Amenities of Literature*

It contains twenty-one numbers, besides that lofty dirge, so unapproachably solemn, "The Phoenix and the Turtle." Of these, five are undoubtedly by Shakespeare. A sixth ("Crabbed age and youth"), if not by Shakespeare, is one of the loveliest lyrics in the language, and I for my part could give it to no other man. Note also that but for Jaggard's enterprise this jewel had been irrevocably lost to us, since it is known only through *The Passionate Pilgrim*. Marlowe's "Live with me and be my love" and Barnefield's "As it fell upon a Day," make numbers seven and eight. And I imagine that even Mr. Swinburne cannot afford to scorn "Sweet rose, fair flower, untimely pluck'd soon vaded"—which again only occurs in *The Passionate Pilgrim*. These nine numbers, with "The Phœnix and the Turtle," make up more than half the book. Among the rest we have the pretty and respectable lyrics; "If music and sweet poetry agree;" "Good night, good rest;" "Lord, how mine eyes throw gazes to the east;" "When as thine eye hath chose the dame," and the gay little song, "It was a Lording's daughter." There remain the *Venus and Adonis* sonnets and "My flocks feed not." Mr. Swinburne may call these "dirty and dreary doggrel," an he list, with no more risk than of being held a somewhat over-anxious moralist. But to call the whole book worthless is mere abuse of words. It is true, nevertheless, that one of the only two copies existing of the first edition was bought for three halfpence.

A. T. Quiller-Couch, 1895, *Adventures in Criticism*, p. 39

The Phoenix and the Turtle (1601)

To unassisted readers, it would appear to be a lament on the death of a poet, and of his poetic mistress. But the poem is so quaint, and charming in diction, tone, and allusions, and in its perfect metre and harmony, that I would gladly have the fullest illustration yet attainable. I consider this piece a good example of the rule, that there is a poetry for bards proper, as well as a poetry for the world of readers. This poem, if published for the first time, and without a known author's name, would find no general reception. Only the poets would save it.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1875, *Parnassus*, Preface, p. vi

For ourselves we agree with Malone, Emerson, Halliwell-Phillipps, and others, that the poem is clearly Shakespeare's. Aside from the internal evidence, the circumstances of its publication seem to us enough to settle the question. . . . The other poems he prints are all, we believe, acknowledged to be from the authors to whom he ascribes them. Why should we hesitate to accept "The Phœnix and the Turtle" as Shakespeare's, when Chester marks it as his, and when it is in no respect worthy of him?

William J. Rolfe, 1883, "Shakespeariana," *Literary World,* vol. 14, p. 96

The genuineness of the contribution with Shakespeare's name subscribed is now generally admitted, though no successful attempt has yet been made to explain the allegory, nor is any light thrown upon it by the other poems in the collection; among the contributors, in addition to Shakespeare, were Jonson, Chapman, and Marston. In all probability the occasion and subject of the whole collection, which has so long baffled patient research, will some day be discovered, and Shakespeare's meaning will be clear. It would seem from the title-page that the private family history of Sir John Salisbury ought to yield the necessary clue to the events.

Israel Gollancz, 1896, ed. *Temple Shakespeare,* Preface to *Lucrece,* p. viii

Titus Andronicus ((?) 1588-1600; 1591)*

It is also agreed, that every man heere, exercise his owne Iudgement, and not censure by *Contagion,* or upon *trust,* from anothers voice, or face. . . . Hee that will sweare *Ieronimo* or *Andronicus* are the best playes yet, shall passe unexcepted at, heere, as a man whose Iudgement shewes it is constant, and hath stood still, these five and twentie, or thirtie yeeres.

Ben Jonson, 1614, *Bartholomew Fayre, The Induction*

I have been told by some anciently conversant with the stage, that it was not originally his, but brought by a private author to be acted, and he only gave some master-touches to one or two of the principal parts or characters.

Edward Ravenscroft, 1678, *Titus Andronicus,* Preface

All the editors and critics agree with Mr. Theobald in supposing this play spurious. I see no reason for differing from them; for the colour of the style is wholly different from that of the other plays, and there is an attempt at regular versification and artificial closes, not always inelegant, yet seldom

*See note on page 181.

pleasing. The barbarity of the spectacles, and the general massacre, which are here exhibited, can scarcely be conceived tolerable to any audience; yet we are told by Jonson, that they were not only born, but praised. That Shakspeare wrote any part, though Theobald declares it incontestible, I see no reason for believing.

Samuel Johnson, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays*

Critics have vied with one another in loading this play with epithets of contempt; and indeed, as compared with the higher products of dramatic poetry, it has little to recommend it. But in itself, and for its times, it was very far from giving the indication of an unpoetical or undramatic mind. One proof of this is, that it was long a popular favorite on the stage. It is full of defects, but these are precisely such as a youthful aspirant, in an age of authorship, would be most likely to exhibit—such as the subjection to the taste of the day, good or bad, and the absence of that dramatic truth and reality which some experience of human passion, and observation of life and manners, can alone give the power to produce.

Gulian Crommelin Verplanck, 1844-47, ed.
The Illustrated Shakespeare, vol. III

It may at first seem strange that his name should have come to be associated with a work in which we find so few traces of his hand; but he may have improved the old play in other ways than by rewriting any considerable portion of it—by omissions, re-arrangement of scenes, and the like —and its great popularity in the revised form may have led to its being commonly known as "Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*" (in distinction from the earlier version, whosesoever it may have been), until at length it got to be generally regarded as one of his original productions. The verdict of the editors and critics is so nearly unanimous against the authenticity of the play that the burden of proof clearly rests with the other side.

William J. Rolfe, 1883, ed. *Shakespeare's Tragedy of Titus Andronicus,* Introduction, p. 15

As I re-read this play after coming straight from the study of Marlowe, I find again and again passages that, as it seems to me, no hand but his could have written. It is not easy in a question of this kind to set down in detail reasons for our belief. Marlowe's influence permeated so thoroughly the dramatic literature of his day, that it is hard sometimes to distinguish between master and pupil. When the master is writing at his best there is no difficulty, but when his work is hasty and ill-digested, or has been left incomplete and has received additions from other hands, then our perplexity is great. In our disgust at the brutal horrors that crowd

the pages of *Titus Andronicus,* we must beware of blinding ourselves to the imaginative power that marks much of the writing.

A. H. Bullen, 1884, ed. *Works of Christopher Marlowe,* Introduction, vol. I, p. lxxvi

It was no invention of Shakespeare's; it is not reconstructed upon Shakespeare's lines; but, as we see, characters were renamed, some of the matter was recast, crudities were struck out, here and there the writing was touched over, and some fresh lines were inserted. We find lines in which we feel young Shakespeare's touch, and while the whole construction of the play that Shakespeare worked upon is thoroughly unlike the inventions of Shakespeare himself, its crude horrors are, no doubt, felt the more intensely for his removal of absurdities in the first way of telling them, and for touches of his that gave more pomp of words and more force to the style, with now and then some small hint of a grace beyond the reach of the inventor and first writer of the play.

Henry Morley, 1893, *English Writers,* vol. X, p. 45

It is quite unnecessary for any opponent of blind or exaggerated Shakespeare-worship to demonstrate to us the impossibility of bringing *Titus Andronicus* into harmony with any other than a barbarous conception of tragic poetry. But although the play is simply omitted without apology from the Danish translation of Shakespeare's works, it must by no means be overlooked by the student, whose chief interest lies in observing the genesis and development of the poet's genius. The lower its point of departure, the more marvellous its soaring flight.

Georg Brandes, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study,* vol. I, p. 41

Love's Labor's Lost (1588-98; 1594)*

In this play, which all the editors have concurred to censure, and some have rejected as unworthy of our poet, it must be confessed that there are many passages mean, childish, and vulgar; and some which ought not to have been exhibited, as we are told they were, to a maiden queen. But there are scattered through the whole many sparks of genius; nor is there any play that has more evident marks of the hand of Shakspeare.

Samuel Johnson, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays*

Lover's Labour Lost is numbered among the pieces of his youth. It is a humorsome display of frolic; a whole cornucopia of the most vivacious

*See note on page 181.

jokes is emptied into it. Youth is certainly perceivable in the lavish superfluity of labour in the execution: the unbroken succession of plays on words, and sallies of every description, hardly leave the spectator time to breathe; the sparkles of wit fly about in such profusion that they resemble a blaze of fireworks; while the dialogue, for the most part, is in the same hurried style in which the passing masks at a carnival attempt to banter each other.

Augustus William Schlegel, 1809, *Dramatic Art and Literature,* Lecture XII, tr. Black, rev. Morrison

If we were to part with any of the author's comedies, it should be this. Yet we should be loth to part with Don Adriano de Armado, that mighty potentate of nonsense; or his page, that handful of wit; with Nathaniel the curate, or Holofernes the schoolmaster, and their dispute after dinner, on "the golden cadences of poesy"; with Costard the clown, or Dull the constable. Biron is too accomplished a character to be lost to the world, and yet he could not appear without his fellow-courtiers and the king: and if we were to leave out the ladies, the gentlemen would have no mistresses. So that we believe we must let the whole play stand as it is, and we shall hardly venture to "set a mark of reprobation on it." Still we have some objections to the style, which we think savours more of the pedantic spirit of Shakespear's time than of his own genius; more of controversial divinity, and the logic of Peter Lombard, than of the inspiration of the Muse. It transports us quite as much to the manners of the court, and the quirks of courts of law, as to the scenes of nature, or the fairy-land of his own imagination.

William Hazlitt, 1817-69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays,* p. 206

If this juvenile drama had been the only one extant of our Shakspere, and we possessed the tradition only of his riper works, or accounts of them in writers who had not even mentioned this play—how many of Shakspere's characteristic features might we not still have discovered in *Love's Labour's Lost,* though as in a portrait taken of him in his boyhood. I can never sufficiently admire the wonderful activity of thought throughout the whole of the first scene of the play, rendered natural, as it is, by the choice of the characters, and the whimsical determination on which the drama is founded.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1818, *Lectures and Notes on Shakspere,* ed. Ashe, p. 283

Love's Labour's Lost is not a favourite play with the general reader, but the cause of its modern unpopularity is to be sought for in the circum-

stances of its satire having been principally directed to fashions of language that have long passed away, and consequently little understood, rather than in any great deficiency of invention. When it has been deeply studied, there are few comedies that will afford more gratification. It abounds with touches of the highest humour; and the playful tricks and discoveries are conducted with so much dexterity, that, when we arrive at the conclusion, the chief wonder is how the interest could have been preserved in the development of so extremely meagre a plot. Rightly considered, this drama, being a satire on the humour of conversation, could not have been woven from a story involving much situation other than the merely amusing, or from any plot which invited the admission of the language of passion; for the free use of the latter would have been evidently inconsistent with the unity of the author's satirical design.

J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps, 1855-79, *Memoranda on Love's Labour's Lost,* p. 18

It is this foppery of delicate language, this fashionable plaything of his time, with which Shakespeare is occupied in *Love's Labours Lost.* He shows us the manner in all its stages; passing from the grotesque and vulgar pedantry of Holofernes, through the extravagant but polished caricature of Armado, to become the peculiar characteristic of a real though still quaint poetry in Biron himself, who is still chargeable even at his best with just a little affectation. As Shakespeare laughs broadly at it in Holofernes or Armado, so he is the analyst of its curious charm in Biron; and this analysis involves a delicate raillery by Shakespeare himself at his own chosen manner.

Walter Pater, 1878, *Appreciations,* p. 171

The Comedy of Errors (1589-1623; 1591)*

After such sport, a *Comedy of Errors* (like to Plautus his Menechmus) was *played by the players;* so that night began and continued to the end, in nothing but confusion and errors; whereupon it was ever afterwards called the Night of Errors.

Gesta Grayorum, 1594

Until I saw it on the stage, (not mangled into an opera,) I had not imagined the extent of the mistakes, the drollery of them, their unabated continuance, till, at the end of the fourth act, they reached their climax wih the assistance of Dr. Pinch, when the audience in their laughter rolled about

*See note on page 181.

like waves. . . . To the strange contrast of grave astonishment among the actors, with their laughable situations in the eyes of the spectators, who are let into the secret, is to be ascribed the irresistible effect.

Charles Armitage Brown, 1838, *Shakespeare's Autobiographical Poems*, pp. 272, 273

In this play Shakspere gayly confronts improbabilities, and requires the spectator to accept them. He adds to the twins Antipholus the twins Dromio. If we are in for improbability, let us at least be repaid for it by fun, and have that in abundance. Let the incredible become a two-fold incredibility, and it is none the worse. We may conclude that, while Shakspere was ready to try his hand upon a farcical subject, a single experiment satisfied him that this was not his province, for to such subjects he never returned.

Edward Dowden, 1875-80, *Shakspere, A Critical Study of His Mind and Art*, p. 50

The *Comedy of Errors* not only surpasses the *Menæchmi* in the greater complexity of its plot, its greater variety of incident, but also in its more generous treatment of human nature. Not that elaborately wrought-out characters are to be sought in it; for this, it must be remembered, is Shakespeare's most absolutely comic, and almost farcical play, and in this particular class of work he never handled the incisive tool of an engraver, like Molière,—his pencil runs galloping over the canvas with a light fantastic touch; and this play is, moreover, one of his most youthful performances.

Paul Stapfer, 1880, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity*, tr. Carey, p. 150

The reading of the play is like threading the mazes of a dream; where people and things are the same and not the same in the same moment. The mistakes, crosses and vexations in the plot so rapidly succeed that to keep the course of events distinct in the mind is almost as desperate an achievement as following all the ramifications of a genealogical tree; and—may it be said?—about as useful. The piece, however, is amusing; and although our intellectual remuneration for the time expended is not remarkable, yet we should bear in mind that it is essentially a drama of *action* and circumstance; and if it could be effectually represented, the result would be infinitely ludicrous.

Charles Cowden Clarke, 1881, *Shakespeare-Characters, Second Series*, quoted by Rolfe

A Midsummer Night's Dream (1590-1600; 1594-95)*

Wild and fantastical as this play is, all the parts in their various modes are well written, and give the kind of pleasure which the author designed. Fairies in his time were much in fashion; common tradition had made them familiar, and Spenser's poem had made them great.

Samuel Johnson, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays*

It is astonishing that Shakespear should be considered, not only by foreigners, but by many of our own critics, as a gloomy and heavy writer, who painted nothing but "gorgons and hydras, and chimeras dire." His subtlety exceeds that of all other dramatic writers, insomuch that a celebrated person of the present day said that he regarded him rather as a metaphysician than a poet. His delicacy and sportive gaiety are infinite. In the *Midsummer Night's Dream* alone, we should imagine, there is more sweetness and beauty of description than in the whole range of French poetry put together. What we mean is this, that we will produce out of that single play ten passages, to which we do not think any ten passages in the works of the French poets can be opposed, displaying equal fancy and imagery.

William Hazlitt, 1817-69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays,* p. 92

Of all his works, the *Midsummer Night's Dream* leaves the strongest impression on my mind, that this miserable world must have, for once at least, contained a happy man. This play is so purely delicious, so little intermixed with the painful passions from which poetry distils her sterner sweets, so fragrant with hilarity, so bland and yet so bold, that I cannot imagine Shakspeare's mind to have been in any other frame than that of healthful ecstacy when the sparks of inspiration thrilled through his brain in composing it.

Thomas Campbell, 1838, ed. *Shakspeare's Plays,* Moxon ed., Life

Bottom the weaver is the representative of the whole human race. His confidence in his own power is equally profound, whether he exclaims, "Let me play the lion too"; or whether he sings alone, "that they shall hear I am not afraid"; or whether, conscious that he is surrounded with spirits, he cries out, with his voice of authority, "Where's Peasblossom?" In every situation Bottom is the same,—the same personification of that self-love which the simple cannot conceal, and the wise can with difficulty suppress.

Charles Knight, 1849, *Studies of Shakspere,* bk. v, ch. ii, p. 209

*See note on page 181.

Here each kind of excellence is equal throughout; there are here no purple patches on a gown of serge, but one seamless and imperial robe of a single dye. Of the lyric or the prosaic part, the counterchange of loves and laughters, of fancy fine as air and imagination high as heaven, what need can there be for any one to shame himself by the helpless attempt to say some word not utterly unworthy? Let it suffice us to accept this poem as the landmark of our first stage, and pause to look back from it on what lies behind us of partial or of perfect work.

Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare,* p. 49

In no other of his works has Shakespeare more brilliantly shown that complete dominance of theme which is manifested in the perfect preservation of proportion. The strands of action are braided with astonishing grace. The fourfold story is never allowed to lapse into dullness or obscurity. There is caprice, but no distortion. The supernatural machinery is never wrested toward the production of startling or monstrous effects, but it deftly impels each mortal personage in the natural line of human development. The dream-spirit is maintained throughout, and perhaps it is for this reason,—that the poet was living and thinking and writing in the free, untrammelled world of his own spacious and airy imagination, and not in any definite sphere of this earth,—that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is so radically superior to the other comedies written by him at about this period.

William Winter, 1888, *Augustin Daly's Arrangement for Representation,* Preface, p. 12

Enthralled by Shakespeare's art, and submissive to it, we accept without question every stroke of time's thievish progress, be it fast or slow; and, at the close, acknowledge that the promise of the opening lines has been redeemed. But if, in spite of all our best endeavors, our feeble wits refuse to follow him, Shakespeare smiles gently and benignantly as the curtain falls, and begging us to take no offence at shadows, bids us think it all as no more yielding than a dream.

Horace Howard Furness, 1895, *New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare, A Midsommer Nights Dreame,* Preface, p. xxxiv

Two Gentlemen of Verona (1590-92)

That this play is rightly attributed to Shakspeare, I have little doubt. If it be taken from him, to whom shall it be given? This question may be asked of all the disputed plays, except *Titus Andronicus,* and it will be

found more credible, that Shakspeare might sometimes sink below his highest flights, than that any other should rise up to his lowest.

Samuel Johnson, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays*

The characters are drawn with strength and truth, and it is remarkable that in this play we have the first idea of what has been since called genteel comedy. The elegance, yet the contrast in Valentine and Protheus, is a very striking picture, not only of the etiquette, but the perfidy of polite life; for Protheus is more corrupted by education than nature, of which his remorse and his contrition are proofs, while Valentine has a mind so correctly inclined to rectitude that fashion and folly cannot corrupt it.

Charles Dibdin, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage,* vol. III, p. 38

In parts, no doubt, the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* is sparkling with beauties, but as a whole it betrays a certain youthful awkwardness, and in execution a want of sustained power and depth. The composition is distinguished by the easy and harmonious flow of its language, by a peculiar freshness of view, by the *naïveté* of the particular thoughts, an unrestrained burst of wit and humour (*e. g.* in Speed and Launce), and by the delineation of the dramatic characters, which although but sketchily executed, is nevertheless striking, and invariably truthful. On the other hand, both the general view and the particular thought are deficient in depth; the parts do not readily round themselves off and combine into a whole; much is merely indicated which ought to have been more fully developed, and the conclusion especially is brought about too rapidly and without due preparation.

Hermann Ulrici, 1839, *Shakspeare's Dramatic Art,* p. 285

The composition, as a whole, does not seem to have been poured forth with the rapid abundance of his later works; but, in its graver parts, bears evidence of the young author's careful elaboration, seldom daring to deviate from the habits of versification to which his muse had been accustomed, and fearful of venturing on any untried novelty of expression. . . . Upon the whole, the *Two Gentlemen of Verona,* whatever rank of merit may be assigned to it by critics, will always be read and studied with deeper interest than it can probably excite as a mere literary performance, because it exhibits to us the great dramatist at a most interesting point in his career; giving striking, but imperfect and irregular, indications of his future powers.

Gulian Crommelin Verplanck, 1844-47, ed. *The Illustrated Shakespeare*

There is an even sweetness, a simple equality of grace in thought and language which keeps the whole poem in tune, written as it is in a subdued key of unambitious harmony. In perfect unity and keeping the composition of this beautiful sketch may perhaps be said to mark a stage of advance, a new point of work attained, a faint but sensible change of manner, signalised by increased firmness of hand and clearness of outline. Slight and swift in execution as it is, few and simple as are the chords here struck of character and emotion, every shade of drawing and every note of sound is at one with the whole scheme of form and music.

Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare*, p. 48

Romeo and Juliet (1591-93; 1595)*

March Ist.—To the Opera, and there saw *Romeo and Juliet*, the first time it was ever acted; but it is a play of itself the worst that ever I heard in my life, and the worst acted that ever I saw these people do, and I am resolved to go no more to see the first time of acting, for they were all of them out more or less.

Samuel Pepys, 1662, *Diary and Correspondence*

Shakespear show'd the best of his skill in his Mercutio, and he said himself, that he was forc'd to kill him in the third act, to prevent being kill'd by him. But, for my part, I cannot find he was so dangerous a person: I see nothing in him but what was so exceeding harmless, that he might have lived to the end of the play, and died in his bed, without offence to any man.

John Dryden, 1672, *The Conquest of Granada*, Second Part, Defence of the Epilogue

Romeo and Juliet is best known by that copy of it which is generally performed, and in which Garrick has very judiciously done little more than make Shakespear alter his own play, fitting the catastrophe to the original invention of the novelist. The two grand points that Garrick, by the advice of his friends, has insisted on, are the expunging the idea of Rosalind, and Romeo's sudden inconstancy on the first impression of Juliet's superior beauty, and heightening the catastrophe, by Romeo's first swallowing the poison, then in the extacy of finding Juliet survive, forgetting the desperate act he had committed, and flattering himself with a delusive hope of future happiness, and, again, the astonishment and delight of Juliet at recovering

*See note on page 181.

her lover, all which is instantly damped by a discovery that her fallacious hopes are to be but momentary.

Charles Dibdin, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage,* vol. III, p. 43

Who can repress a groan at the sight of an enlightened nation, that counts among its critics a Pope and an Addison, going into raptures over the description of an Apothecary in *Romeo and Juliet?* It is the most hideous and disgusting burlesque. True it is that a flash of lightning illumines it, as in all Shakspere's shadows. Romeo utters a reflection on the unfortunate wretch who clings so closely to life burdened though he be with every wretchedness.

Francois René, Vicomte de Chateaubriand, 1801, *Shakspere ou Shakspeare*

By the manner in which he has handled it, it has become a glorious song of praise on that inexpressible feeling which ennobles the soul and gives to it its highest sublimity, and which elevates even the senses themselves into soul, and at the same time is a melancholy elegy on its frailty from its own nature and external circumstances: at once the deification and the burial of love. It appears here like a heavenly spark that, descending to the earth, is converted into a flash of lightning, by which mortal creatures are almost in the same moment set on fire and consumed. Whatever is most intoxicating in the odour of a southern spring, languishing in the song of the nightingale, or voluptuous on the first opening of the rose, is breathed into this poem. But even more rapidly than the earliest blossoms of youth and beauty decay, it hurries on from the first timidly-bold declaration of love and modest return to the most unlimited passion, to an irrevocable union; then, amidst alternating storms of rapture and despair, to the death of the two lovers, who still appear enviable as their love survives them, and as by their death they have obtained a triumph over every separating power.

Augustus William Schlegel, 1809, *Dramatic Art and Literature,* tr. Black, Lecture XII

While it has profoundly made use of all that is most true and deep in the innermost nature of love, the poet has imbued himself also with those external forms which the human mind had long before created in this domain of poetry. He preferred rather not to be original than to misconceive the form suitable; he preferred to borrow the expression and the style which centuries long had fashioned and developed, for in this the very test of their genuineness and durability lay; and thus the lyric love-poetry of all

ages is, as it were, recognised in the forms, images, and expressions employed in this tragedy of love.

G. G. Gervinus, 1845-62, *Shakespeare Commentaries*, tr. Bunnett, p. 208

The language of the lovers often degenerates into quibbling; but what they feel with naivete they express with affectation. What they say is an idyll of the ball-room; what they feel is a most gracious and vivid picture of innocent love. And it is under this image that the two lovers remain graven on our imagination. All the world over, when two hearts, young and pure, fall in love with each other, if they are cultivated, they think of Romeo and Juliet; if they are uncultivated, they do better than think of them, they re-enact them.

Saint-Marc Girardin, 1855, *Cours de Litterature Dramatique*, vol. III, p. 364

In two of the scenes we may say that the whole heart or spirit of *Romeo and Juliet* is summed up and distilled into perfect and pure expression; and these two are written in blank verse of equable and blameless melody. Outside the garden scene in the second act and the balcony scene in the third, there is much that is fanciful and graceful, much of the elegiac pathos and fervid if fantastic passion; much also of superfluous rhetoric and (as it were) of wordy melody, which flows and foams hither and thither into something of extravagance and excess; but in these two there is no flaw, no outbreak, no superflux, and no failure. Throughout certain scenes of the third and fourth acts I think it may be reasonably and reverently allowed that the river of verse has broken its banks, not as yet through the force and weight of its gathering stream, but merely through the weakness of the barriers or boundaries found insufficient to confine it.

Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare*, p. 35

Richard II (1593; 1596)*

We cannot suppose a more awful and affecting transaction, than a prince brought before his subjects, compelled to deprive himself of his royalty, and to resign his crown to the popular claimant, his near relation. This is a subject worthy the genius of Shakespeare; and yet, it must be confessed he has fallen infinitely short of his usual powers to excite that tumult of passion which the action merited; he was ever too fond of quibble and conceit, but here he has indulged himself beyond his usual predilection for them; and I cannot help thinking, from this circumstance alone, that

*See note on page 181.

Richard II was written and acted much earlier than the date in the stationers books of 1597.

Thomas Davies, 1784, *Dramatic Micellanies,* vol. I, p. 169

It is this wonderful subjection of the poetical power to the higher law of truth—to the poetical truth, which is the highest truth, comprehending and expounding the historical truth—which must furnish the clue to the proper understanding of the drama of *Richard II.* It appears to us that, when the poet first undertook

"to ope
The purple testament of bleeding war."—

to unfold the roll of the causes and consequences of that usurpation of the house of Lancaster which plunged three or four generations of Englishmen in bloodshed and misery—he approached the subject with an inflexibility of purpose as totally removed as it was possible to be from the levity of a partisan.

Charles Knight, 1849, *Studies of Shakspere,* bk. iv, ch. i, p. 152

Richard II is one of those plays of Shakespeare's which have never taken firm hold of the stage. Its exclusively political action and its lack of female characters are mainly to blame for this. But it is exceedingly interesting as his first attempt at independent treatment of a historical theme, and it rises far above the play which served as its model.

Georg Brandes, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study,* vol. I, p. 143

Richard III (1594)

To him that impt my fame with Clio's quill,
Whose magick rais'd me from oblivion's den;
That writ my storie on the Muses hill,
And with my actions dignifi'd his pen:
He that from Helicon sends many a rill,
Whose nectared veines, are drunke by thirstie men;
Crown'd be his stile with fame, his head with bayes;
And none detract, but gratulate his praise.

Christopher Brooke, 1614, *The Ghost of Richard Third,* pt. II, st. i, ed. Grosart

This is one of the most celebrated of our author's performances; yet I know not whether it has not happened to him as to others, to be praised most, when praise is not most deserved. That this play has scenes noble in

themselves, and very well contrived to strike in the exhibition, cannot be denied. But some parts are trifling, others shocking, and some improbable.

Samuel Johnson, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays*

If we compare these speeches (of Edmund in *Lear,* and of Iago in *Othello*) with Richard's, and in like manner if we compare the way in which Iago's plot is first sown, and springs up and gradually grows and ripens in his brain, with Richard's downright enunciation of his projected series of crimes from the first, we may discern the contrast between the youth and the mature manhood of the mightiest intellect that every lived upon earth, a contrast almost equally observable in the difference between the diction and metre of the two plays, and not unlike that between a great river rushing along turbidly in spring, bearing the freshly melted snows from Alpine mountains, with flakes of light scattered here and there over its surface, and the same river, when its waters have subsided into their autumnal tranquility, and compose a vast mirror for the whole landscape around them, and for the sun and stars and sky and clouds overhead.

A. W. and J. C. Hare, 1827-48, *Guesses at Truth*

This tragedy forms an epoch in the history of our poet and in that of dramatic poetry. In his preceding dramas he showed rather the suppleness than the knotted strength of his genius; but in the subtle cunning, the commanding courage, the lofty pride and ambition, the remorselessness of the third Richard, and in the whole sublime depravity of his character, he reminds us of the eulogium passed by Fuseli on Michael Angelo, who says, that Michael could stamp sublimity on the hump of a dwarf. So complete was this picture of human guilt, that Milton, in seeking for a guilty hero, was obliged to descend to the nether regions.

Thomas Campbell, 1838, ed. *Shakspeare's Plays,* Moxon ed., Life

Richard III is, and long has been—taking the stage and the closet together—the most universally and uninterruptedly popular of its author's works. Few of Shakespeare's plays passed through more than two or three editions, as they originally appeared, separately, in the customary form of quarto pamphlets. Of *Hamlet,* which seems to have been the most popular of the other tragedies, there are but six of these editions; while of *Richard III,* between 1597 and 1634, we have, in addition to the copies in the first two folios, no less than eight separate editions, still preserved; and it is possible that there may have been yet another, no longer extant. There are also more references and allusions to it, in the

writings of Shakespeare's contemporaries, and in those of the next generation of authors, than to any other of his works. For instance, Bishop Corbet, in his poems, Fuller, in his *Church History,* and Milton, in one of his prose controversial tracts, all refer to it as familiar to their readers. It has kept perpetual possession of the stage, either in its primitive form, or as altered and adapted to the tastes of the times by Colley Cibber or by John Kemble. In one or other of these forms Richard III. has been the favourite character of all the eminent English tragedians, from Burbage, the original "Crookback," who was identified in his day, in the public mind, with the part, through the long succession of the monarchs of the English stage—Betterton, Cibber, Quin, Garrick, Henderson, Kemble, Cooke, Kean—down to our own days. Yet, in all the higher attributes of the poetic drama, *Richard III* bears no comparison with the poet's greater tragedies, or with the graver scenes of his more brilliant comedies. Intellectually and poetically, it must be assigned to a much lower class than *Romeo and Juliet,* or *Othello;* than *Lear* or *Macbeth;* than the *Tempest* or *The Merchant of Venice.*

Gulian Crommelin Verplanck, 1844-47, ed.
The Illustrated Shakespeare

The drama is not so much a composition of co-operative characters, mutually developing and developed, as the prolonged yet hurried outcome of a single character, to which the other persons serve but as exponents and conductors; as if he were a volume of electricity disclosing himself by means of others, and quenching their active powers in the very process of doing so.

Henry Norman Hudson, 1872-83, *Shakespeare: His Life, Art, and Characters,* vol. II, p. 156

The references in this play to the three parts of *Henry VI* are so many as to make it impossible to deny the serial character and unity of the whole tetralogy, whatever questions may be raised as to the authorship of parts of it. The whole exhibits the fate of virtuous weakness in the face of unscrupulous strength, and concludes with the fate of this strength in the face of Providence. Henry VI. perishes by natural causes. The forces which destroy Richard III. are wholly supernatural. Three women are introduced whose curses are inevitable, like those of the Eumenides. Ghosts prophesy the event of a battle. Men's imprecations on themselves are literally fulfilled. Their destiny is made more to depend on their words than their actions; it is removed out of their hands, and placed in those of some unearthly power which hears prayer and judges the earth. As if the lesson of the poet was that there is human remedy where there are ordinary

human motives, but that for power joined with Machiavellian policy the only remedy is patience dependent on Providence.

Richard Simpson, 1874, *The Politics of Shakspere's Historical Plays, New Shakspere Society Transactions*, p. 396

The demonic intensity which distinguishes the play proceeds from the character of Richard as from its source and centre. As with the chief personages of Marlowe's plays, so Richard in this play rather occupies the imagination by audacity and force than insinuates himself through some subtle solvent, some magic and mystery of art. His character does not grow upon us; from the first it is complete. We are not curious to discover what Richard is, as we are curious to come into presence of the soul of Hamlet. We are in no doubt about Richard; but it yields us a strong sensation to observe him in various circumstances and situations; we are roused and animated by the presence of almost superhuman energy and power, even though that power and that energy be malign.

Edward Dowden, 1875-80, *Shakspere, A Critical Study of His Mind and Art*, p. 161

Villain as he is, he has the villain's coolness too. He never poses temper, except when he strikes the third messenger. As a general he is as skilful as Henry the Fifth, and looks to his sentinels; while, like Henry the Fourth, he is up and doing at the first notice of danger, and takes the right practical measures. Yet the conscience he ridicules, he is made to feel—

"there is no creature loves me;
And if I die, no soul shall pity me."

But we must note that this is only when his will is but half awake, half paralyzed by its weight of sleep. As soon as the man is himself again, neither conscience nor care for love or pity troubles him. The weakest part of the play is the scene of the citizens' talk; and the poorness of it, and the monotony of the women's curses, have given rise to the theory that in *Richard III*. Shakspere was only rewriting an old play, of which he let bits stand. But though I once thought this possible, I have since become certain that it is not so. The wooing of Anne by Richard has stirred me, in reading it aloud, almost as much as any thing else in Shakspere. Note, too, how the first lines of the play lift you out of the mist and confusion of the *Henry VI* plays into the sun of Shakspere's genius.

Frederick James Furnivall, 1877, ed. *The Leopold Shakspere*

In no other play of Shakespeare's, we may surely say, is the leading character so absolutely predominant as here. He absorbs almost the whole of the interest, and it is a triumph of Shakespeare's art that he makes us, in

spite of everything, follow him with sympathy. This is partly because several of his victims are so worthless that their fate seems well deserved. Anne's weakness deprives her of our sympathy, and Richard's crime loses something of its horror when we see how lightly it is forgiven by the one who ought to take it most to heart. In spite of all his iniquities, he has wit and courage on his side—a wit which sometimes rises to Mephistophelean humour, a courage which does not fail him even in the moment of disaster, but sheds a glory over his fall which is lacking to the triumph of his coldly correct opponent. However false and hypocritical he may be towards others, he is no hypocrite to himself. He is chemically free from self-delusion, even applying to himself the most derogatory terms; and this candour in the depths of his nature appeals to us. It must be said for him, too, that threats and curses recoil from him innocuous, that neither hatred nor violence nor superior force can dash his courage. Strength of character is such a rare quality that it arouses sympathy even in a criminal.

Georg Brandes, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study*, vol. I, p. 163

Henry VI, Part I (1590-92)

Have certainly received what may be called a *thorough repair*. . . . I should conceive it would not be very difficult to feel one's way thro' these Plays, and distinguish every where the metal from the clay.

Maurice Morgann, 1777-1827, *Essay on the Dramatic Character of Falstaff*, p. 49, note

In Margaret we have a foreshadowing of Lady Macbeth finely contrasted with the meek and holy Henry, whose gentle lowliness of spirit is brought out with a prominence and beauty a good deal beyond what history alone would have suggested to the Poet; as even in the Lancastrian chronicles he appears unfitted for sovereignty, more from mere imbecility than from gentle virtues, unsuited to a station demanding "sterner stuff." Occasionally, too, as in the Cardinal's death, York's last scene, and many of Henry's speeches, appears a power of the pathetic and of the terrible, in which, however imperfectly developed, we cannot mistake the future author of *Lear* and *Macbeth*. It is on that account that, while from the absence of that overflowing thought and quick-flashing fancy, which pervade the other histories, the paucity of those Shakespearian bold felicities of expression which fasten themselves upon the memory, and from the inferiority of the versification in freedom and melody, they can add nothing to the reputation of Shakespeare as a poet, they have nevertheless taken strong hold of the general mind, are familiar to all readers, and have certainly substituted their representations of the persons and incidents of the wars of

York and Lancaster in popular opinion, alike to those of sober narratives of the chroniclers, and of the philosophic inferences of modern historians.

Gulian Crommelin Verplanck, 1844-47, ed.
The Illustrated Shakespeare, vol. I

If we separate all the scenes between York and Somerset, Mortimer and York, Margaret and Suffolk, and read them by themselves, we feel that we are looking upon a series of scenes which exhibit Shakespeare's style in his historical plays just in the manner in which we should have expected him to have written at the comencement of his career. We see the skilful and witty turn of speech and the germ of his figurative language; we perceive already the fine clever repartees and the more choice form of expression; in Mortimer's death-scene and in the lessons of his deeply-dissembled silent policy, which while dying he transmits to York, we see, with Hallam, all the genuine feeling and knowledge of human nature which belongs to Shakespeare in similar pathetic or political scenes in his other dramas; all . . . certainly in the germ which prefigures future perfection. These scenes contrast decidedly with the trivial, tedious war scenes and the alternate bombastic and dull disputes between Gloster and Winchester; they adhere to the common highway of historical poetry, though they have sufficient of the freshness of youthful art to furnish Schiller in his *Maid of Orleans* with many beautiful traits, and indeed with the principal idea of his drama.

G. G. Gervinus, 1845-62, *Shakespeare Commentaries,*
tr. Bunn'tt, p. 116

There is a general agreement among critics in attributing to Shakspere the scene in which the white and red roses are plucked as emblems of the rival parties in the state; perhaps the scene of the wooing of Margaret by Suffolk if not written by Shakspere was touched by him. The general spirit of the drama belongs to an older school than the Shaksperian, and it is a happiness not to have to ascribe to our greatest poet the crude and hateful handling of the character of Joan of Arc, excused though to some extent it may be by the concurrence of view in our old English chronicles.

Edward Dowden, 1877, *Shakspere, (Literature Primers),* p. 63

It is broken and choppy to an intolerable degree. The only part of it to be put down to Shakspere is the Temple Garden scene of the red and white roses; and that has nothing specially characteristic in it, though the proportion of extra-syllabled lines in it forbids us supposing it is very early work. There must be at least three hands in the play, one of whom must have written—probably, only—the rhyme scenes of Talbot and his son.

But poor as this play seems to us, we have Nash's evidence that it touched Elizabethan audiences.

Frederick James Furnivall, 1877, ed. *The Leopold Shakspere,* Introduction, p. xxxviii

Henry VI, Part II (1594-95; 1590-92)*

I am certain that *Henry VI* is in the main not Shakespeare's, though here and there he may have put in a touch, as he undoubtedly did in *The Two Noble Kinsmen.*

Alfred Lord Tennyson, 1883, "Some Criticism on Poets," *Memoir by His Son,* vol. II, p. 290

Ah yes! Even Shakespeare is guilty of injustice towards this noble maiden who saved her country, and he treats her in an unfriendly and unloving manner, even if he does not proclaim himself her decided enemy. And even if she saved her country with the aid of hell, she still deserves respect and admiration. Or are the critics right, who hold that those passages in which the maid makes her appearance, as also *Parts II.* and *III.* of *Henry VI* are not by Shakespeare? They maintain that he only revised this trilogy which he took from older plays. I would gladly be of their opinion for the sake of the Maid of Orleans, but their arguments are untenable. In many parts these doubtful plays bear the full impress of Shakespeare's genius.

Heinrich Heine, 1838-95, *Notes on Shakespeare Heroines,* tr. Benecke, p. 84

Henry VI, Part III (1594-95; 1590-92)*

From mere inferiority nothing can be inferred; in the productions of wit there will be inequality. Sometimes judgment will err, and sometimes the matter itself will defeat the artist. Of every author's works one will be the best, and one will be the worst. . . . Dissimilitude of style, and heterogeneousness of sentiment, may sufficiently show that a work does not really belong to the reputed author. But in these plays no such marks of spuriousness are found. The diction, the versification, and the figures, are Shakspeare's.

Samuel Johnson, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays*

Never attracting or affecting me quite as the other works of Shakespeare, nor indeed ever seeming to me to be his works, they had never been so

*See note on page 181.

perused as to engage me in spontaneous interpretations or restoration. Even up to the present hour too, of Shakespeare's close, bold, and subtle reasoning; his epigramatic play of words and ideas; his grace and dignity of dialogue; his psychological curiosity; his metaphorical prodigality; his disclosed fruits of pensive experience; his encased kernels of consolidated thought; his touches of human nature, here finely caught, there mysteriously inspired; his world-wide illustration; his magical imagery of outward things reflected from the innermost sense of them; all involved in a stream of melody whose onflow becomes in itself pathetic;—of these from the three parts of *Henry the Sixth* I still miss some sensible measure.

Henry Halford Vaughan, 1880, *New Readings and New Renderings of Shakespeare's Tragedies,* vol. II, p. v

King John (1595; 1594)*

I think its worth has been rather underrated. . . . In the order of Shakspeare's tragedies, I should place it immediately after *Othello, Macbeth, Lear, Hamlet, Julius Cæsar,* and *Romeo and Juliet.*

Thomas Davies, 1784, *Dramatic Micellanies,* vol. I, p. 114

The prevailing characteristic both of the plot and of the chief personages in the play of *King John* is that of "craft." The poet, it is true, has taken —as he found it in the monkish record—the *historical* character of the king; but he has, with his own supreme genius, worked it out from the first scene to the last with undeviating consistency, and a revolting determination of purpose.

Charles Cowden Clarke, 1863, *Shakespeare-Characters,* p. 319

There is little in the play of *King John* which strengthens or gladdens the heart. In the tug of selfish power hither and thither, amidst the struggle of kingly greeds and priestly pride, amidst the sales of cities, the loveless marriage of princes, the rumors and confusion of the people, a pathetic beauty illumines the boyish figure of Arthur, so gracious, so passive, untouched by the adult rapacities and crimes of the others:

> "Good, my mother, peace!
> I would that I were low laid in my grave;
> I am not worth this coil that's made for me."

The voice of maternal passion, a woman's voice, impotent and shrill, among the unheeding male forces, goes up also from the play. There is the pity of stern armed men for the ruin of a child's life. These, and the boisterous

*See note on page 181.

but genuine and hearty patriotism of Faulconbridge, are the only presences of human virtue or beauty which are to be perceived in the degenerate world depicted by Shakspere.

Edward Dowden, 1875-80, *Shakspere, A Critical Study of His Mind and Art*, p. 153

In this play, as in almost all the works of Shakespeare's younger years, the reader is perpetually amazed to find the finest poetical and rhetorical passages side by side with the most intolerable euphuistic affectations. And we cannot allege the excuse that these are legacies from the older play. On the contrary, there is nothing of the kind to be found in it; they are added by Shakespeare, evidently with the express purpose of displaying delicacy and profundity of thought.

Georg Brandes, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study*, vol. I, p. 174

The Merchant of Venice (1596-98)

The Play it self, take it all together, seems to me to be one of the most finish'd of any of *Shakespear's*. The Tale indeed, in that Part relating to the Caskets, and the extravagant and unusual kind of Bond given by *Antonio*, is a little too much remov'd from the Rules of Probability: But taking the Fact for granted, we must allow it to be very beautifully written. There is something in the Friendship of *Antonio* to *Bassanio* very Great, Generous, and Tender.

Nicholas Rowe, 1709, *Some Account of the Life &c., of Mr. William Shakespear*, p. xix

With all my enthusiasm for Shakspeare, it is one of his plays that I like the least. The story of the caskets is silly, and except the character of Shylock, I see nothing beyond the attainment of a mortal: Euripides, or Racine or Voltaire, might have written all the rest.

Horace Walpole, 1788, *Letters*, vol. IX, p. 124

I always consider *The Merchant of Venice* as concluding with the punishment of Shylock in the fourth Act; and a finer catastrophe does not occur in any drama, ancient or modern. The fifth act may be considered as a light afterpiece; but it is an afterpiece by Shakespear, and in his best manner.

Henry James Pye, 1807, *Comments on the Commentators on Shakespear*, p. 77

The Merchant of Venice is one of Shakspeare's most perfect works: popular to an extraordinary degree, and calculated to produce the most powerful effect on the stage, and at the same time a wonder of ingenuity and art for the reflecting critic. Shylock, the Jew, is one of the inconceivable masterpieces of characterization of which Shakspeare alone furnishes us with examples. It is easy for the poet and the player to exhibit a caricature of national sentiments, modes of speaking, and gestures. Shylock however, is everything but a common Jew: he possesses a very determinate and original individuality, and yet we perceive a light touch of Judaism in everything which he says and does. We imagine we hear a sprinkling of the Jewish pronunciation in the mere written words, as we sometimes still find it in the higher classes, notwithstanding their social refinement. In tranquil situations, what is foreign to the European blood and Christian sentiments is less perceivable, but in passion the national stamp appears more strongly marked. All these inimitable niceties the finished art of a great actor can alone properly express.

Augustus William Schlegel, 1809, *Dramatic Art and Literature*, tr. Black, Lecture XII

Portia is not a very great favourite with us; neither are we in love with her maid, Nerissa. Portia has a certain degree of affectation and pedantry about her, which is very unusual in Shakespear's women, but which perhaps was a proper qualification for the office of a "civil doctor," which she undertakes and executes so successfully. The speech about Mercy is very well; but there are a thousand finer ones in Shakespear. We do not admire the scene of the caskets: and object entirely to the Black Prince, Morocchius. We should like Jessica better if she had not deceived and robbed her father, and Lorenzo, if he had not married a Jewess, though he thinks he has a right to wrong a Jew.

William Hazlitt, 1817-69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, p. 193

Shylock is abhorred and execrated; but the skill of the poet has endued him with qualities which preserve him from contempt. His fierceness, cruelty, and relentlessness are dignified by intellectual vigour. His actions are deliberate, they are the emanations of his bold and masculine understanding. Let the art with which he negotiates his bond be contemplated; consider his coolness, his plausible exaggeration of the dangers to which Antonio's property is subjected; his bitter sarcasms and insulting gibes; all efforts of the mind to induce a belief of his indifference, and to disguise his real design: follow him into court, behold him maintaining his superiority in argument, unmoved by insult and unawed by power, till disappointment

leaves him nothing to contend for and anguish stops his speech, and then let his claims to intellectual distinction be decided on.

Augustine Skottowe, 1824, *Life of Shakspeare,* vol. I, p. 325

In the management of the plot, which is sufficiently complex without the slightest confusion or incoherence, I do not conceive that it has been surpassed in the annals of any theatre. . . . The variety of characters in *The Merchant of Venice,* and the powerful delination of those upon whom the interest chiefly depends, the effectiveness of many scenes in representation, the copiousness of the wit, and the beauty of the language, it would be superfluous to extol; nor is it our office to repeat a tale so often told as the praise of Shakspeare. In the language there is the commencement of a metaphysical obscurity which soon became characteristic; but it is perhaps less observable than in any later play.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe,* vol. II, pt. ii, ch. vi, par. 50

When I saw this play at Drury Lane, there stood behind me in the box a pale, fair Briton, who at the end of the Fourth Act, fell a-weeping passionately, several times exclaiming, "The poor man is wronged!" . . . When I think of those tears I have to rank *The Merchant of Venice* with the Tragedies, although the frame of the piece is decorated with the merriest figures of Masks, of Satyrs, and of Cupids, and the Poet meant the Play for a Comedy. . . . Wandering dreamhunter that I am, I looked round every where on the Rialto to see if I could not find Shylock. . . . But I found him nowhere on the Rialto, and I determined to seek my old acquaintance in the Synagogue. The Jews were then celebrating their day of Atonement. . . . Although I looked all round the Synagogue, I nowhere discovered the face of Shylock, I saw him not. But towards evening, when, according to Jewish belief, the gates of Heaven are shut, and no prayer can then obtain admittance, I heard a voice, with a ripple of tears that were never wept by eyes. It was a sob that could come only from a breast that held in it all the martyrdom which, for eighteen centuries, had been borne by a whole tortured people. It was a death-rattle of a soul sinking down dead-tired at heaven's gates. And I seemed to know the voice, and I felt that I had heard it long ago, when, in utter despair, it moaned out, then as now, "Jessica, my child!"

Heinrich Heine, 1838-56(?), *Sammtliche Werke,* vol. V, p. 324

The Merchant of Venice marks the perfection of his development as a dramatist in the completeness of its stage effect, the ingenuity of its incidents, the ease of its movement, the poetic beauty of its higher passages,

the reserve and self-control with which its poetry is used, the conception and development of character, and above all the mastery with which character and event are grouped round the figure of Shylock.

John Richard Green, 1874, *A Short History of the English People*, ch. vii, sec. vii

I chose Shakespeare's Portia, then as now my ideal of a perfect woman,— . . . the wise, witty woman, loving with all her soul, and submitting with all her heart to a man whom everybody but herself (who was the best judge) would have judged her inferior; the laughter-loving, light-hearted, true-hearted, deep-hearted woman, full of keen perception, of active efficiency, of wisdom prompted by love, of tenderest unselfishness, of generous magnanimity; noble, simple, humble, pure; true, dutiful, religious, and full of fun; delightful above all others, the woman of women.

Frances Anne Kemble, 1876, "Old Woman's Gossip," *Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 37, p. 713

The character of Shylock is one of Shakespeare's most perfect creations, even though he devotes comparatively little space to its elucidation. The conception of this figure is as grand as the perfection of art with which it appears upon the scene. The very first words he speaks are characteristic, and still more the manner in which he speaks them; and at each one of his utterances we seem to see the man before us, and we ourselves supply the gestures, the play of expression, which accompany his speech. As in his *Richard III* Shakespeare has here furnished the actor with a worthy and most grateful task.

Bernhard Ten Brink, 1892-95, *Five Lectures on Shakespeare*, tr. Franklin, p. 185

Taming of the Shrew (1596-97)

April 9.—To the King's house, . . . and there we saw *The Tameing of a Shrew*, which hath some very good pieces in it, but generally is but a mean play; and the best part "Sawny," done by Lacy, hath not half its life, by reason of the words, I suppose, not being understood, at least by me.

Samuel Pepys, 1667, *Diary and Correspondence*

The Taming of the Shrew is almost the only one of Shakespear's comedies that has a regular plot, and downright moral.

William Hazlitt, 1817-69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, p. 219

Shakspeare is quite as much at home in the sports afforded by birds of the air, as in the pursuit of beasts of chase; his knowledge of Falconry, or Hawking, so favourite a pastime with the noble and gentle of his day, is shown by numerous passages in his plays; and probably no writer on the Noble Science ever compressed so much technical information in a narrower compass than we find in eight lines in *The Taming of the Shrew,* where Petruchio rejoices over the result of his treatment of the newly-married Katharine:—

"My falcon now is sharp, and passing empty, etc."

George Russell French, 1868, *Shakspeareana Genealogica,* Appendix, p. 572

The critics have been very warm in praise of Shakespeare's Induction, some, however, regretting that he did not keep it up till the end of the play, others suspecting that he did so keep it up, but that the continuation has been lost. I think otherwise decidedly, being convinced that in this as in other things the Poet was wiser than his critics. For the purpose of the Induction was but to start an interest in the play; and he probably knew that such interest, once started, would be rather hindered than furthered by any coming-in of other matter; that there would be no time to think of Sly amidst such a whirlwind of oddities and whimsicalities as he was going to raise. But the regret in question well approves the goodness of the thing; for, the better the thing, the more apt men are to think they have not enough until they have too much.

Henry Norman Hudson, 1880, ed. *Harvard Shakespeare,* vol. II, p. 136

The refined instinct, artistic judgment, and consummate taste of Shakespeare were perhaps never so wonderfully shown as in his recast of another man's work—a man of real if rough genius for comedy—which we get in the *Taming of the Shrew.* Only the collation of scene with scene, then of speech with speech, then of line with line, will show how much may be borrowed from a stranger's material and how much may be added to it by the same stroke of a single hand. All the force and humour alike of character and situation belong to Shakespeare's eclipsed and forlorn precursor; he has added nothing; he has tempered and enriched everything. That the luckless author of the first sketch is like to remain a man as nameless as the deed of the witches in *Macbeth,* unless some chance or caprice of accident should suddenly flash favouring light on his now impersonal and indiscoverable individuality, seems clear enough when we take into account the double and final disproof of his imaginery identity with Marlowe, which Mr. Dyce

has put forward with such unanswerable certitude. He is a clumsy and course-fingered plagiarist from that poet, and his stolen jewels of expression look so grossly out of place in the homely setting of his usual style that they seem transmuted from real to sham. On the other hand, he is of all the Pre-Shakespeareans known to us incomparably the truest, the richest, the most powerful and original humourist; one indeed without a second on that ground, for "the rest are nowhere."

Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare*, p. 124

Henry IV, Part I (1596-97)

December 31.—In Paul's Church-yard I bought the play of *Henry the Fourth,* and so went to the new Theatre and saw it acted; but my expectation being too great, it did not please me, as otherwise I believe it would; and my having a book, I believe did spoil it a little.

Samuel Pepys, 1660, *Diary and Correspondence*

John Fastolfe, Knight. . . . The Stage hath been overbold with his memory, making him a Thrasonical Puff, and emblem of Mock-valour. True it is, Sir John Oldcastle did first bear the brunt of the one, being made the make-sport in all Plays for a Coward. It is easily known out of what purse this plack peny came; the Papists railing on him for a Heretick, and therefore he must also be a Coward, though indeed he was a man of arms, every inch of him, and as valiant as any in his age. Now as I am glad that Sir John Oldcastle is put out, so I am sorry that Sir John Fastolfe is put in, to relieve his memory in this base service, to be the anvil for every dull wit to strike upon. Nor is our Comedian excusable, by some alteration of his name, writing him Sir John Falstafe (and making him the property of pleasure for King Henry the Fifth, to abuse), seeing the vicinity of sounds intrench on the memory of that worthy Knight, and few do heed the inconsiderable difference in spelling of their name.

Thomas Fuller, 1662, *The Worthies of England*, ed. Nichols, vol. II, p. 131

As to the Comical part, 'tis certainly our Author's own Invention; and the Character of Sir *John Falstaff,* is owned by Mr. *Dryden,* to be the best of Comical Characters: and the Author himself had so good an Opinion of it, that he continued it in no less than four Plays. This part used to be play'd by Mr. *Lacy,* and never fail'd of universal applause.

Gerard Langbaine, 1691, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, p. 456

He is a man at once young and old, enterprising and fat, a dupe and a wit, harmless and wicked, weak in principle and resolute by constitution, cowardly in appearance and brave in reality, a knave without malice, a liar without deceit, and a knight, a gentleman, and a soldier without either dignity, decency, or honor. This is a character which, though it may be decompounded, could not, I believe, have been formed, nor the ingredients of it duly mingled, upon any receipt whatever. It required the hand of Shakspeare himself to give to every particular part a relish of the whole, and of the whole to every particular part—alike the same incongruous, identical Falstaff, whether to the grave Chief-justice he vainly talks of his youth and offers to caper for a thousand, or cries to Mrs. Doll, "I am old!" "I am old!" although she is seated on his lap, and he is courting her for busses.

Maurice Morgann, 1777-1825, *Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff*

If Shakespear's fondness for the ludicrous sometimes led to faults in his tragedies (which was not often the case) he has made us amends by the character of Falstaff. This is perhaps the most substantial comic character that ever was invented. Sir John carries a most portly presence in the mind's eye; and in him, not to speak it profanely, "we behold the fulness of the spirit of wit and humour bodily." We are as well acquainted with his person as his mind, and his jokes come upon us with double force and relish from the quantity of flesh through which they make their way, as he shakes his fat sides with laughter, or "lards the lean earth as he walks along." Other comic characters seem, if we approach and handle them, to resolves themselves into air, "into thin air;" but this is embodied and palpable to the grossest apprehension: it lies "three fingers deep upon the ribs," it plays about the lungs and diaphragm with all the force of animal enjoyment. His body is like a good estate to his mind, from which he receives rents and revenues of profit and pleasure in kind, according to its extent and the richness of the soil. Wit is often a meagre substitute for pleasurable sensation; an effusion of spleen and petty spite at the comforts of others, from feeling none in itself. Falstaff's wit is an emanation of a fine constitution; an exuberance of good-humour and good-nature; an overflowing of his love of laughter and good-fellowship; a giving vent to his heart's ease, and over-contentment with himself and others.

William Hazlitt, 1817-69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, p. 133

As to Hotspur, who can help liking him? With all his hot-headedness and petulance, his daring and his boasting, his humour with his wife, his scorn of that scented courtier, his lashing himself into a rage with Henry the

Fourth, his keenness at a bargain (North-country to a T), his hatred of music, his love of his crop-eared roan. Yet he is passion's slave, the thrall of every temper and whim. Himself and his own glory are really his gods, as at his death he says. What is his native land, what is England's weal, to him? Things to be sacrificed because his temper's crossed. One third to Wales, to England's foe, one third to himself, and but one third to Richard's rightful heir. In one sense, Hotspur is Kate the Shrew, in armour, and a man. But how he lives in the play, and starts from the printed page!

Frederick James Furnivall, 1877, ed. *The Leopold Shakspere*

There is no such perfect conception of the selfish sensualist in literature, and the conception is all the more perfect because of the wit that lights up the vice of Falstaff, a cold light without tenderness, for he was not a good fellow, though a merry companion. I am not sure but I should put him beside Hamlet, and on the same level, for the merit of his artistic completeness, and at one time I much preferred him, or at least his humour.

William Dean Howells, 1895, *My Literary Passions*, p. 72

Henry IV, Part II (1597-98)

I fancy every reader, when he ends this play, cries out with Desdemona, "O most lame and impotent conclusion!" . . . None of Shakspeare's plays are more read than the First and Second Parts of *Henry the Fourth*. Perhaps no author has ever in two plays afforded so much delight. The great events are interesting, for the fate of kingdoms depends upon them; the slighter occurrences are diverting, and, except one or two, sufficiently probable; the incidents are multiplied with wonderful fertility of invention, and the characters diversified with the utmost nicety of discernment, and the profoundest skill in the nature of man.

Samuel Johnson, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays*

It having been written, as the external and internal evidence concur in showing, not very long after the first part, when the author's mind was filled with the characters, story, and the spirit of that, the two together have the unity of a single drama. It is, however, inferior to its predecessor as a work of dramatic art, though, in my judgment, not at all so as a work of genius. It is not as perfect as the other as an historical tragi-comedy, as on its tragic side it has a less vivid and sustained interest, and approaches in those scenes more to the dramatized chronicle; in fact, adhering much more rigidly to historical authority, and deviating from it very little except

in compressing into connected continuous actions events really separated by years.

Gulian Crommelin Verplanck, 1844-47, ed.
The Illustrated Shakespeare

The character of Sir John Falstaff is, I should think, the most witty and humorous combined that ever was portrayed. So palpably is the person presented to the mind's eye, that not only do we give him a veritable location in history, but the others, the real characters in the period, compared with him, appear to be the idealised people, and invented to be his foils and contrasts. As there is no romance like the romance of real life, so no real-life character comes home to our apprehensions and credulities like the romance of Sir John Falstaff. He is one grand identity. His body is fitted for his mind—bountiful, exuberant, and luxurious; and his mind was well appointed for his body—being rich, ample, sensual, sensuous, and imaginative. The very fatness of his person is the most felicitous correspondent to the unlimited opulence of his imagination.

Charles Cowden Clarke, *Shakespeare-Characters,* p. 431

The Merry Wives of Windsor (1598-99)

But Shakespear's play in fourteen days was writ,
And in that space to make all just and fit,
Was an attempt surpassing human wit.
Yet our great Shakespear's matchless muse was such
None ever in so small time perform'd so much.

John Denis, 1702, *The Comical Gallant*

The Merry Wives of Windsor is no doubt a very amusing play, with a great deal of humour, character, and nature in it: but we should have liked it much better if any one else had been the hero of it, instead of Falstaff. We could have been contented if Shakespear had not been "commanded to show the knight in love." Wits and philosophers, for the most part, do not shine in that character; and Sir John himself by no means comes off with flying colours.

William Hazlitt, 1817-69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays,* p. 229

The Merry Wives of Windsor is the work of Shakspeare in which he has best displayed English manners; for though there is something of this in the historical plays, yet we rarely see in them such a picture of actual life as comedy ought to represent. . . . In this play the English gentleman in age and youth, is brought upon the stage, slightly caricatured in Shallow,

and far more so in Slender. The latter, indeed, is a perfect satire, and I think was so intended, on the brilliant youth of the provinces, such as we may believe it to have been before the introduction of newspapers and tunrpike roads; awkward and boobyish among civil people, but at home in rude sports, and proud of exploits at which the town would laugh, yet perhaps with more courage and good-nature than the laughers. No doubt can be raised that the family of Lucy is ridiculed in Shallow; but those who have recourse to the old fable of the deer-stealing, forget that Shakspeare never lost sight of his native county, and went, perhaps, every summer, to Stratford. It is not impossible that some arrogance of the provincial squires toward a player, whom, though a gentleman by birth and the recent grant of arms, they might not reckon such, excited his malicious wit to those admirable delineations.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, pt. iii, ch. vi, par. 38

That Queen Bess should have desired to see Falstaff making love proves her to have been, as she was, a gross-minded old baggage. Shakespeare has evaded the difficulty with great skill. He knew that Falstaff could not be in love; and has mixed but a little, a very little, *pruritus* with his fortune-hunting courtship. But the Falstaff of *The Merry Wives* is not the Falstaff of *Henry IV*. It is a big-bellied imposter, assuming his name and style, or, at best, it is Falstaff in dotage. The Mrs. Quickly of Windsor is not mine hostess of the Boar's Head; but she is a very pleasant, busy, good-natured, unprincipled old woman, whom it is impossible to be angry with. Shallow should not have left his seat in Gloucestershire and his magisterial duties. Ford's jealousy is of too serious a complexion for the rest of the play. The merry wives are a delightful pair. Methinks I see them, with their comely, middle-aged visages, their dainty white ruffs and toys, their half-witch-like conic hats, their full farthingales, their neat though not over-slim waists, their housewifely keys, their girdles, their sly laughing looks, their apple-red cheeks, their brows the lines whereon look more like the work of mirth than years. And sweet Anne Page—she is a pretty little creature whom one would like to take on one's knee.

Hartley Coleridge, 1849-51, *Essays and Marginalia*, vol. II, pp. 133, 134

The Merry Wives of Windsor is a play written expressly for the barbarian aristocrats with their hatred of ideas, their insensibility to beauty, their hard efficient manners, and their demand for impropriety. The good folk of London liked to see a prince or a duke, and they liked to see him made gracious and generous. These royal and noble persons at Windsor wished

to see the interior life of country gentlemen of the middle class, and to see the women of the middle class with their excellent *bourgeois* morals, and rough, jocose ways. The comedy of hearing a French physician and a Welsh parson speak broken English was appreciated by these spectators, who uttered their mother-tongue with exemplary accent. Shakspere did not make a grievance of his task. He threw himself into it with spirit, and despatched his work quickly—in fourteen days, if we accept the tradition. But Falstaff he was not prepared to recall from heaven or from hell. He dressed up a fat rogue, brought forward for the occasion from the back premises of the poet's imagination, in Falstaff's clothes; he allowed persons and places and times to jumble themselves up as they pleased; he made it impossible for the most laborious nineteenth-century critic to patch on *The Merry Wives* to *Henry IV*. But the Queen and her court laughed as the buck-basket was emptied into the ditch, no more suspecting that its gross lading was not the incomparable jester of Eastcheap than Ford suspected the woman with a great beard to be other than the veritable Dame Pratt.

Edward Dowden, 1875-80, *Shakspere, A Critical Study of His Mind and Art*, p. 329

It has failed to find favour with some, owing to a not ignoble dislike at seeing the degradation or discomfiture of Falstaff, but it must be remembered that Shakespeare, though never cruel with the morbid cruelty of the modern pessimist, is always perfectly awake to the facts of life. And, as a matter of fact, the bowls that Falstaff played involve the rubbers that are here depicted. It has also been a common saying that the play is little better than a farce. If so, it can only be said that Shakespeare very happily took or made the opportunity of showing how a farce also can pass under the species of eternity. How infinitely do the most farcical of the characters, such as Sir Hugh and Dr. Caius, excel the mere "Vices" of earlier playwrights! Who but Shakespeare had—we may almost say who but Shakespeare has—made an immortal thing of a mere ass, a mere puff-ball of foolish froth like Slender! If Chaucer had had the dramatic as he had the narrative faculty and atmosphere, he might have done Mrs. Quickly, who is a very near relative, in somewhat lower life, of the Wife of Bath, and rapidly ripening for her future experiences in Eastcheap. But Shallow is above even Chaucer, as are also the subtle differentiation between Mrs. Page and Mrs. Ford, and the half-dozen strokes which her creator judged sufficient for sweet Anne Page. As for Falstaff, it is mistaken affection which thinks him degraded, or "translated" Bottom-fashion. He is even as elsewhere, though under an unluckier star.

George Saintsbury, 1898, *A Short History of English Literature*, p. 323

Henry V (1599)

This drama is full of singularly beautiful detached passages: for example, the reflections of the King upon ceremony,—the description of the deaths of York and Suffolk,—the glorious speech of the King before the battle,—the chorus of the fourth act,—remarkable illustrations of Shakspere's power as a descriptive poet. Nothing can be finer, also, than the commonwealth of bees in the first act. It is full of the most exquisite imagery and music. The art employed in transforming the whole scene of the hive into a resemblance of humanity is a perfect study—every successive object, as it is brought forward, being invested with its characteristic attribute.

Charles Knight, 1849, *Studies of Shakspere,* bk. iv, ch. iii, p. 185

As the noblest glories of England are presented in this play, so it presents Shakspere's ideal of active, practical, heroic manhood. If Hamlet exhibits the dangers and weakness of the contemplative nature, and Prospero, its calm and its conquest, Henry exhibits the utmost greatness which the active nature can attain. . . . In this play no character except Henry greatly interested Shakspere, unless it be the Welsh Fluellen, whom he loves (as Scott loved the Baron of Bradwardine) for his real simplicity underlying his apparatus of learning, and his touching faith in the theory of warfare.

Edward Dowden, 1877, *Shakspere, (Literature Primers),* pp. 100, 101

Much Ado About Nothing (1599; 1598)*

This play is so witty, so playful, so abundant in strong writing, and rich humour, that it has always attracted universal applause. The beauties it contains are innumerable, they are a cluster, and are set so thick that they scarcely afford one another relief, and yet the best critic would find it difficult to say which of them ought to be displaced.

Charles Dibdin, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage,* vol. III, p. 80

The interest in the plot is always in fact on account of the characters, not *vice versa,* as in almost all other writers; the plot is a mere canvas and no more. Hence arises the true justification of the same stratagem being used in regard to Benedick and Beatrice,—the vanity in each being alike. Take away from the *Much Ado About Nothing* all that which is not indispensable to the plot, either as having little to do with it, or, at best, like Dogberry and his comrades, forced into the service, when any other less ingeniously absurd watchmen and night-constables would have answered the mere necessities of the action;—take away Benedick, Beatrice, Dogberry, and the reaction of the former on the character of Hero,—and what will remain?

*See note on page 181.

In other writers the main agent of the plot is always the prominent character; in Shakspere it is so, or is not so, as the character is in itself calculated, or not calculated, to form the plot. Don John is the main-spring of the plot of this play; but he is merely shown and then withdrawn.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1818, *Lectures and Notes on Shakspere*, ed. Ashe, p. 239

Shakspeare has exhibited in Beatrice a spirited and faithful portrait of the fine lady of his own time. The deportment, language, manners, and allusions, are those of a particular class in a particular age; but the individual and dramatic character which forms the groundwork, is strongly discriminated; and being taken from general nature, belongs to every age. In Beatrice, high intellect and high animal spirits meet, and excite each other like fire and air. In her wit, (which is brilliant without being imaginative,) there is a touch of insolence, not unfrequent in women when the wit predominates over reflection and imagination. In her temper, too, there is a slight infusion of the termagant; and her satirical humour plays with such an unrespective levity over all subjects alike, that it required a profound knowledge of women to bring such a character within the pale of our sympathy. But Beatrice, though wilful, is not wayward; she is volatile, not unfeeling. She has not only an exuberance of wit and gayety, but of heart, and soul, and energy of spirit; and is no more like the fine ladies of modern comedy,—whose wit consists in a temporary allusion, or a play upon words, and whose petulance is displayed in a toss of the head, a flirt of the fan, or a flourish of the pocket handkerchief—than one of our modern dandies is like Sir Philip Sidney. In Beatrice, Shakspeare has contrived that the poetry of the character shall not only soften, but heighten its comic effect.

Anna Brownell Jameson, 1832, *Characteristics of Women*

As You Like It (1600; 1599)*

Of this play the fable is wild and pleasing. I know not how the ladies will approve the facility with which both Rosiland and Celia give their hearts. To Celia much may be forgiven for the heroism of her friendship. The character of Jacques is natural and well preserved. The comic dialogue is very sprightly, with less mixture of low buffoonery than in some other plays; and the graver part is elegant and harmonious. By hastening to the end of his work, Shakspeare suppressed the dialogue between the usurper and the hermit, and lost an opportunity of exhibiting a moral lesson in which he might have found matter worthy of his highest powers.

Samuel Johnson, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays*

*See note on page 181.

Shakespear has here converted the forest of Arden into another Arcadia, where they "fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world." It is the most ideal of any of this author's plays. It is a pastoral drama, in which the interest arises more out of the sentiments and characters than out of the actions or situations. It is not what is done, but what is said, that claims our attention. Nursed in solitude, "under the shade of melancholy boughs," the imagination grows soft and delicate, and the wit runs riot in idleness, like a spoiled child, that is never sent to school. Caprice and fancy reign and revel here, and stern necessity is banished to the court. The mild sentiments of humanity are strengthened with thought and leisure; the echo of the cares and noise of the world strikes upon the ear of those "who have felt them knowingly," softened by time and distance. "They hear the tumult, and are still. The very air of the place seems to breathe a spirit of philosophical poetry: to stir the thoughts, to touch the heart with pity, as the drowsy forest rustles to the sighing gale."

William Hazlitt, 1817-69, *Characters of Shakspear's Plays*, p. 214

The sweet and sportive temper of Shakspeare, though it never deserted him, gave way to advancing years, and to the mastering force of serious thought. What he read we know but very imperfectly; yet, in the last years of this century, when five and thirty summers had ripened his genius, it seems that he must have transfused much of the wisdom of past ages into his own all-combining mind. In several of the historical plays, in the *Merchant of Venice,* and especially in *As You Like It,* the philosophic eye, turned inward on the mysteries of human nature, is more and more characteristic; and we might apply to the last comedy the bold figure that Coleridge has less appropriately employed as to the early poems, that "the creative power and the intellectual energy wrestle as in a war-embrace." In no other play, at least, do we find the bright imagination and fascinating grace of Shakspeare's youth so mingled with the thoughtfulness of his maturer age.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe,* pt. ii, ch. vi, par. 51

As You Like It is a caprice. Action there is none; interest barely; likelihood still less. And the whole is charming.

H. A. Taine, 1871, *History of English Literature,* tr. Van Laun, vol. I, bk. ii, ch. iv, p. 343

Nor can it well be worth any man's while to say or to hear for the thousandth time that *As You Like It* would be one of those works which prove, as Landor said long since, the falsehood of the stale axiom that no work

of man's can be perfect, were it not for that one unlucky slip of the brush which has left so ugly a little smear in one corner of the canvas as the betrothal of Oliver to Celia; though, with all reverence for a great name and a noble memory, I can hardly think that matters were much mended in George Sand's adaptation of the play by the transference of her hand to Jaques. Once elsewhere, or twice only at the most, is any such other sacrifice of moral beauty or spiritual harmony to the necessities and traditions of the stake discernible in all the world-wide work of Shakespeare.

Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare*, p. 151

Twelfth Night (1601)

At our feast wee had a play called *Twelue Night, or What you Will,* much like the Commedy of Errores, or Menechmi in Plautus, but most like and neere to that in Italian called *Inganni.* A good practise in it to make the Steward beleeve his Lady widdowe was in love with him, by counterfeyting a letter as from his Lady in generall termes, telling him what shee liked best in him, and prescribing his gesture in smiling, his apparaile, &c., and then when he came to practise making him beleeue they tooke him to be mad.

John Manningham, 1601, *Diary, Feb. 2,* ed. Bruce, p. 18

January 6.—After dinner to the Duke's house, and there saw *Twelfth-Night* acted well, though it be but a silly play, and not related at all to the name or day.

Samuel Pepys, 1663, *Diary and Correspondence*

This is justly considered as one of the most delightful of Shakespear's comedies. It is full of sweetness and pleasantry. It is perhaps too good-natured for comedy. It has little satire, and no spleen. It aims at the ludicrous rather than the ridiculous. It makes us laugh at the follies of mankind, not despise them, and still less bear any ill-will towards them.

William Hazlitt, 1817-69, *Characters of Shakspear's Plays,* p. 180

The love of Viola is the sweetest and tenderest emotion that ever informed the heart of the purest and the most graceful of beings, with a spirit almost divine. Perhaps in the whole range of Shakespeare's poetry there is nothing which comes more unbidden into the mind, and always in connexion with some image of the ethereal beauty of the utterer, than Viola's celebrated speech to the Duke in her assumed garb of the page.

Charles Cowden Clarke, 1863, *Shakespeare-Characters,* p. 196

Of all Shakespeare's Comedies, perhaps *Twelfth Night* is the most richly woven with various hues of love, serious and mock-heroic. The amorous threads take warmer shifting colours from their neighbourhood to the unmitigated remorseless merry-making of the harum-scarum old wag Sir Toby and his sparkling captain in mischief, the "most excellent devil of wit," Maria. Beside their loud conviviality and pitiless fun the languishing sentiment of the cultivated love-lorn Duke stands out seven times refined, and goes with exquisite touch to the innermost sensibilities.

William Minto, 1874-85, *Characteristics of English Poets*, p. 298

All's Well That Ends Well (1601-2)

I cannot reconcile my heart to Bertram; a man noble without generosity, and young without truth; who married Helen as a coward, and leaves her as a profligate; when she is dead by his unkindness, sneaks home to a second marriage, is accused by a woman whom he has wronged, defends himself by falsehood, and is dismissed to happiness.

Samuel Johnson, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays*

All's Well That Ends Well is one of the most pleasing of our author's comedies. The interest is however more of a serious than of a comic nature. The character of Helen is one of great sweetness and delicacy. She is placed in circumstances of the most critical kind, and has to court her husband both as a virgin and a wife: yet the most scrupulous nicety of female modesty is not once violated. There is not one thought or action that ought to bring a blush into her cheeks, or that for a moment lessens her in our esteem. Perhaps the romantic attachment of a beautiful and virtuous girl to one placed above her hopes by the circumstances of birth and fortune, was never so exquisitely expressed as in the reflections which she utters when young Rousillon leaves his mother's house, under whose protection she has been brought up with him, to repair to the French king's court.

William Hazlitt, 1817-69, *Characters of Shakspear's Plays*, p. 202

The comic scenes, and the general graceful ease and fluency of its diction, give an air of lightness and variety to the play that are wanting in the novel. The mere story is not productive of more effect in one than in the other, and the drama makes no pretensions to rank in the first order of excellence. But a value is conferred upon Shakspeare's performance beyond its dramatic merit, by its being the repository of much sententious wisdom, and numerous passages of remarkable elegance. A single speech of the king may be referred to as an instance of both, and Helena's description of her hopeless passion may be selected as exquisitely beautiful.

Augustine Skottowe, 1824, *Life of Shakspeare*, vol. II, p. 142

Helena, as a woman, is more passionate than imaginative; and, as a character, she bears the same relation to Juliet that Isabel bears to Portia. There is equal unity of purpose and effect, with much less of the glow of imagery and the external colouring of poetry in the sentiments, languge and details. It is passion developed under its most profound and serious aspect; as in Isabella, we have the serious and the thoughtful, not the brilliant side of intellect. Both Helena and Isabel are distinguished by high mental powers, tinged with a melancholy sweetness; but in Isabella the serious and energetic part of the character is founded in religious principle; in Helena it is founded in deep passion. There never was, perhaps, a more beautiful picture of a woman's love, cherished in secret, not self-consuming in silent languishment—not pining in thought—not passive and "desponding over its idol"—but patient and hopeful, strong in its own intensity, and sustained by its own fond faith. . . . All the circumstances and details with which Helena is surrounded, are shocking to our feelings and wounding to our delicacy: and yet the beauty of the character is made to triumph over all.

Anna Brownell Jameson, 1832, *Characteristics of Women*

In Helena we clearly see the outlines of one of Shakespeare's great mediatorial women, but placed in a more trying situation than any of them. They all have and must have a common trait—a deeply reconciling spirit, which can see the lesser and surrender it for the greater; they disguise, prevaricate, fib openly, circumvent parent and even the law, to reach the higher end. Formal truth of every kind they immolate for their great ethical object, which is usually the healing of some disruption in the Family; in general, they sacrifice the Moral to the Institutional. All of them do thus—Portia, Rosalind, Viola, Iomgen, down to Anne Page; we follow them with delight and applaud in them just this strength which gives them mastery over their life's problem. But when we come to Helena we call a halt, and ask, Is not that which she sacrifices a higher spiritual good than the end attained? Is the price worth the purchase, and does not meditation for once cut off its own head?

D. J. Snider, 1887, *The Shakespearian Drama, The Comedies*, p. 207

Hamlet (1602-3; 1601-2)*

The | Tragicall Historie of | HAMLET | *Prince of Denmarke* | By William Shakespeare. | As it hath beene diuerse times acted by his Highnesse ser- | uants in the Cittie of London: as also in the two V- | niuersities of Cambridge and Oxford, and else-where | At London printed for N. L. and John Trundell. | 1603.

Title Page of First Edition, 1603

*See note on page 181.

It should be like the *Never-too-well read Arcadia,* where the *Prose* and *Verce* (*Matter* and *Words*) are like his *Mistresses* eyes, one still excelling another and without Corivall: or to come home to the vulgars *Element,* like *Friendly Shakespeare's Tragedies,* where the *Commedian* rides, when the *Tragedian stands* on Tip-toe: Faith it should please all, like Prince *Hamlet.* But in sadnesse, then it were to be feared he would runne mad: Insooth I will not be moone-sicke, to please: nor out of my wits though I displeased all.

Anthony Scoloker, 1604, *Daiphantus, or the Passions of Love, Epistle to the Reader,* Roxburghe Club reprint, 1818

I saw *Hamlet Prince of Denmark* played, but now the old plays began to disgust this refined age, since his Majestie's being so long abroad.

John Evelyn, 1661, *Diary, Nov. 26*

The scene represented by the Players is in wretched verse. This we may, without incurring the denomination of an ill-natured critic, venture to pronounce: that in almost every place where Shakespeare has attempted rhyme, either in the body of his plays, or at the ends of Acts or Scenes, he falls far short of the beauty and force of his blank verse. One would think they were written by two different persons. I believe we may justly take notice that rhyme never arrived at its true beauty, never came to its perfection, in England until long since Shakespeare's time.

Sir Thomas Hanmer, 1736, *Some Remarks on the Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark,* p. 39

If the dramas of Shakspeare were to be characterized, each by the particular excellence which distinguishes it from the rest, we must allow to the tragedy of *Hamlet* the praise of variety. The incidents are so numerous that the argument of the play would make a long tale. The scenes are interchangeably diversified with merriment and solemnity; with merriment, that includes judicious and instructive observations; and solemnity, not strained by poetical violence above the natural sentiments of man. New characters appear from time to time in continual succession, exhibiting various forms of life and particular modes of conversation. The pretended madness of Hamlet causes much mirth, the mournful distraction of Ophelia fills the heart with tenderness, and every personage produces the effect intended, from the apparition, that in the first act chills the blood with horror, to the fop in the last, that exposes affectation to just contempt. The conduct is perhaps not wholly secure against objections. The action is indeed for the most part in continual progression, but there are some scenes which neither forward nor retard it. Of the feigned madness of Hamlet there appears no adequate

cause, for he does nothing which he might not have done with the reputation of sanity.

Samuel Johnson, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays*

Englishmen believe in ghosts no more than the Romans did, yet they take pleasure in the tragedy of *Hamlet,* in which the ghost of a king appears on the stage. Far be it from me to justify everything in that tragedy; it is a vulgar and barbarous drama, which would not be tolerated by the vilest populace of France, or Italy. Hamlet becomes crazy in the second act, and his mistress becomes crazy in the third; the prince slays the father of his mistress under the pretence of killing a rat, and the heroine throws herself into the river; a grave is dug on the stage, and the grave-diggers talk quodlibets worthy of themselves, while holding skulls in their hands; Hamlet responds to their nasty vulgarities in sillinesses no less disgusting. In the meanwhile another of the actors conquers Poland. Hamlet, his mother, and his father-in-law carouse on the stage; songs are sung at table; there is quarreling, fighting, killing,—one would imagine this piece to be the work of a drunken savage. But amidst all these vulgar irregularities, which to this day make the English drama so absurd and so barbarous, there are to be found in *Hamlet* by a *bizarrerie* still greater, some sublime passages, worthy of the greatest genius. It seems as though nature had mingled in the brain of Shakespeare the greatest conceivable strength and grandeur with whatsoever witless vulgarity can devise that is lowest and most detestable. It must be confessed that, amid the beauties which sparkle through this horrible extravagance, the ghost of Hamlet's father has a most striking theatrical effect. It always had a great effect upon the English,—I mean upon those who are the most highly educated, and who see most clearly all the irregularity of their old drama.

François Marie Arouet Voltaire, 1768, *Theatre Complet,* vol. II, p. 201

"The time is out of joint; O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!"

In these words, I imagine, is the key to Hamlet's whole procedure, and to me it is clear that Shakespeare sought to depict a great deed laid upon a soul unequal to the performance of it. In this view I find the piece composed throughout. Here is an oak-tree planted in a costly vase, which should have received into its bosom only lovely flowers; the roots spread out, the vase is shivered to pieces. A beautiful, pure, and most moral nature, without the strength of nerve which makes the hero, sinks beneath a burden which it can neither bear nor throw off; every duty is holy to him,—this too hard. The impossible is required of him,—not the impossible in itself, but

the impossible to him. How he winds, turns, agonizes, advances, and recoils, ever reminded, ever reminding himself, and at last almost loses his purpose from his thoughts, without ever again recovering his peace of mind. . . . Hamlet is endowed more properly with sentiment than with a character; it is events alone that push him on; and accordingly the piece has somewhat the amplification of a novel. But as it is Fate that draws the plan, as the piece proceeds from a deed of terror, and the hero is steadily driven on to a deed of terror, the work is tragic in its highest sense, and admits of no other than a tragic end.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 1778, *WilhelmMeister*

Hamlet is single in its kind: a tragedy of thought inspired by continual and never satisfied meditation on human destiny and the dark perplexity of the events of this world, and calculated to call forth the very same meditation in the minds of the spectators. This enigmatical work resembles those irrational equations in which a fraction of unknown magnitude always remains, that will in no manner admit of solution. Much has been said, much written on this piece, and yet no thinking man who anew expresses himself on it will, in his view of the connection and the signification of all the parts, entirely coincide with his predecessors. . . . Respecting Hamlet's character, I cannot, according to the poet's views as I understand them, pronounce altogether so favourable a sentence as Goethe's.

Augustus William Schlegel, 1809, *Dramatic Art and Literature*, tr. Black

I believe the character of Hamlet may be traced to Shakspere's deep and accurate science in mental philosophy. Indeed, that this character must have some connection with the common fundamental laws of our nature may be assumed from the fact, that Hamlet has been the darling of every country in which the literature of England has been fostered.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1818, *Lectures and Notes on Shakspere*, ed. Ashe, p. 343

Two marvellous Adams, we have just said, are the man of Æschylus, Promotheus, and the man of Shakespeare, Hamlet. Prometheus is action. Hamlet is hesitation. In Prometheus, the obstacle is exterior; in Hamlet is is interior. In Prometheus, the will is securely nailed down by nails of brass and cannot get loose; besides, it has by its side two watchers, Force and Power. In Hamlet the will is more tied down yet; it is bound by previous meditation, the endless chain of the undecided. Try to get out of yourself if you can! What a Gordian knot is our reverie! Slavery from within, that is slavery indeed. Scale this enclosure, "to dream!" escape, if you can, from

this prison, "to love!" the only dungeon is that which walls conscience in. Prometheus, in order to be free, has but a bronze collar to break and a god to conquer; Hamlet must break and conquer himself. Prometheus can raise himself upright, if he only lifts a mountain; to raise himself up, Hamlet must lift his own thoughts. If Prometheus plucks the vulture from his breast, all is said; Hamlet must tear Hamlet from his breast. Prometheus and Hamlet are two naked spleens; from one runs blood, from the other doubt.

Victor Hugo, 1864, *William Shakespeare,* tr. Baillot, p. 195

If a dramatist wished to represent one of his persons as feigning madness, that assumed condition would be naturally desired by the writer to be as like as possible to the real affliction. If the other persons associated with him could at once discover that the madness was put on, of course the entire action would be marred, and the object for which the pretended madness would be designed would be defeated by the discovery. How consummate must be the poet's art who can have so skillfully described, to the minutest symptoms, the mental malady of a great mind as to leave it uncertain to the present day, even among learned physicians versed in such maladies, whether Hamlet's madness was real or assumed.

Nicholas Patrick Stephen Wiseman, 1865,
William Shakespeare, p. 41

Every change in the text of *Hamlet* has impaired its fitness for the stage and increased its value for the closet in exact and perfect proportion. Now, this is not a matter of opinion—of Mr. Pope's opinion or Mr. Carlyle's; it is a matter of fact and evidence. Even in Shakespeare's time the actors threw out his additions; they throw out these very additions in our own. The one especial speech, if any one such especial speech there be, in which the personal genius of Shakespeare soars up to the very highest of its height and strikes down to the very deepest of its depth, is passed over by modern actors; it was cut away by Hemings and Condell. We may almost assume it as certain that no boards have ever echoed—at least, more than once or twice—to the supreme soliloquy of Hamlet. Those words which combine the noblest pleading ever proferred for the rights of human reason with the loftiest vindication ever uttered of those rights, no mortal ear within our knowledge has ever heard spoken on the stage. A convocation even of all priests could not have been more unhesitatingly unanimous in its rejection than seems to have been the hereditary verdict of all actors. It could hardly have been found worthier of theological than it has been found of theatrical condemnation. Yet, beyond all question, magnificent as is that monologue on suicide and doubt which has passed from a proverb into a byword, it is

actually eclipsed and distanced at once on philosophic and on poetical grounds by the late soliloquy on reason and resolution.

Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare,* p. 164

Hamlet is the greatest creation in literature that I know of: though there may be elsewhere finer scenes and passages of poetry. Ugolino and Paolo and Francesca in Dante equal anything anywhere. It is said that Shakespeare was such a poor actor that he never got beyond his ghost in this play, but then the ghost is the most real ghost that ever was. The Queen did not think that Ophelia committed suicide, neither do I.

Alfred Lord Tennyson, 1883, "Some Criticisms on Poets," *Memoir by His Son,* vol. II, p. 291

Hamlet has given the name of Denmark a world-wide renown. Of all Danish men, there is only one who can be called famous on the largest scale; only one with whom the thoughts of men are for ever busied in Europe, Asia and Africa, wherever European culture has made its way; and this one never existed, at any rate in the form in which he has become known to the world. Denmark has produced several men of note—Tycho Brahe, Thorvaldsen, and Hans Christian Andersen—but none of them has attained a hundredth part of Hamlet's fame. The *Hamlet* literature is comparable in extent to the literature of one of the smaller European peoples—the Slovaks, for instance.

Georg Brandes, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study,* vol. II, p. 2

Hamlet was the only drama by Shakespeare that was acted in his lifetime at the two Universities. It has since attracted more attention from actors, playgoers, and readers of all capacities than any other of Shakespeare's plays. Its world-wide popularity from its author's day to our own, when it is as warmly welcomed in the theatres of France and Germany as in those of England and America, is the most striking of the many testimonies to the eminence of Shakespeare's dramatic instinct. At a first glance there seems little in the play to attract the uneducated or the unreflecting. . . . It is the intensity of interest which Shakespeare contrives to excite in the character of the hero that explains the position of the play in popular esteem. The play's unrivalled power of attraction lies in the pathetic fascination exerted on minds of almost every calibre by the central figure—a high-born youth of chivalric instincts and finely developed intellect, who, when stirred to avenge in action a desperate private wrong, is foiled by introspective workings of the brain that paralyse the will.

Sidney Lee, 1898, *A Life of William Shakespeare,* pp. 224, 225

Measure for Measure (1603)

Of this play, the light or comic part is very natural and pleasing, but the grave scenes, if a few passages be excepted, have more labour than elegance. The plot is rather intricate than artful. The time of the action is indefinite; some time, we know not how much, must have elapsed between the recess of the duke and the imprisonment of Claudio; for he must have learned the story of Mariana in his disguise, or he delegated his power to a man already known to be corrupted. The unities of action and place are sufficiently preserved.

Samuel Johnson, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays*

Yet, notwithstanding this agitating truthfulness, how tender and mild is the pervading tone of the picture! The piece takes improperly its name from punishment; the true significance of the whole is the triumph of mercy over strict justice, no man being himself so free from errors as to be entitled to deal it out to his equals. The most beautiful embellishment of the composition is the character of Isabella. . . . whose heavenly purity, amid the general corruption, is not stained with one unholy thought. In the humble robes of the novice she is a very angel of light.

Augustus William Schlegel, 1809, *Dramatic Art and Literature*

This play, which is Shakspere's throughout, is to me the most painful—say rather, the only painful—part of his genuine works. The comic and tragic parts equally border on the μισητον,—the one being disgusting, the other horrible; and the pardon and marriage of Angelo not merely baffles the strong indignant claim of justice—(for cruelty, with lust and damnable baseness, cannot be forgiven, because we cannot conceive them as being morally repented of;) but it is likewise degrading to the character of woman. Beaumont and Fletcher, who can follow Shakespere in his errors only, have presented a still worse, because more loathsome and contradictory, instance of the same kind in the *Night-Walker,* in the marriage of Alathe to Algripe. Of the counterbalancing beauties of *Measure for Measure,* I need say nothing; for I have already remarked that the play is Shakspere's throughout.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1818, *Lectures and Notes on Shakspere,* ed. Ashe, p. 299

I do not value the comic parts highly: Lucio's impudent profligacy, the result rather of sensual debasement than of natural ill disposition, is well represented; but Elbow is a very inferior repetition of Dogberry. In dramatic effect, *Measure for Measure* ranks high: the two scenes between Isabella and Angelo, that between her and Claudio, those where the Duke

appears in disguise, and the catastrophe in the fifth act, are admirably written and very interesting; except so far as the spectator's knowledge of the two stratagems which have deceived Angelo may prevent him from participating in the indignation at Isabella's imaginary wrong, which her lamentations would excite.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe,* pt. iii, ch. vi, par. 40

In *Measure for Measure* in contrast with the flawless execution of *Romeo and Juliet,* Shakespeare has spent his art in just enough modification of the scheme of the older play to make it exponent of this purpose, adapting its terrible essential incidents, so that Coleridge found it the only painful work among Shakespeare's dramas, and leaving for the reader of to-day more than the usual number of difficult expressions; but infusing a lavish colour and a profound significance into it, so that under his touch certain select portions of it rise far above the level of all but his own best poetry, and working out of it a morality so characteristic that the play might well pass for the central expression of his moral judgments. It remains a comedy, as indeed is congruous with the bland, half-humorous equity which informs the whole composition, sinking from the heights of sorrow and terror into the rough scheme of the earlier piece; yet it is hardly less full of what is really tragic in man's existence than if Claudio had indeed "stooped to death." Even the humorous concluding scenes have traits of special grace, retaining in less emphatic passages a stray line or word of power, as it seems, so that we watch to the end for the traces where the nobler hand has glanced along, leaving its vestiges, as if accidentally or wastefully, in the rising of the style.

Walter Pater, 1874, *Appreciations,* p. 176

Even in that unequal melody, *Measure for Measure,* the great scene between Isabel and Claudio so far transcends anything that English, anything that European, drama had had to show for nearly two thousand years, that in this special point of view it remains perhaps the most wonderful in Shakespeare. Marlowe has nothing like it; his greatest passages, psychologically speaking, are always monologues; he cannot even attempt the clash and play of soul with soul that is so miraculously given here.

George Saintsbury, 1898, *A Short History of English Literature,* p. 323

Julius Caesar (1601-3)

This may shew with what indignity our poet treats the noblest Romans. But there is no other cloth in his wardrobe. Every one must wear a fool's coat

that comes to be dressed by him; nor is he more civil to the ladies—Portia, in good manners, might have challenged more respect; she that shines a glory of the first magnitude in the gallery of heroic dames, is with our poet scarce one remove from a natural; she is the own cousin-german of one piece, the very same impertinent silly flesh and blood with Desdemona. Shakespear's genius lay for comedy and humour. In tragedy he appears quite out of his element; his brains are turned—he raves and rambles without any coherence, any spark of reason, or any rule to control him, to set bounds to his phrenzy.

Thomas Rymer, 1693, *A Short View of the Tragedy of the Last Age*

Of this tragedy many particular passages deserve regard, and the contention and reconcilement of Brutus and Cassius is universally celebrated; but I have never been strongly agitated in perusing it, and think it somewhat cold and unaffecting, compared with some other of Shakespeare's plays; his adherence to the real story, and to Roman manners, seems to have impeded the natural vigour of his genius.

Samuel Johnson, 1768, *General Observations on Shakespeare's Plays*

I know no part of Shakspere that more impresses on me the belief of his genius being superhuman, than this scene between Brutus and Cassius. In the Gnostic heresy, it might have been credited with less absurdity than most of their dogmas, that the Supreme had employed him to create, previously to his function of representing, characters.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1818, *Lectures and Notes on Shakspere*, ed. Ashe, p. 315

In *Julius Cæsar* Shakspere makes a complete imaginative study of the case of a man predestined to failure. . . . Brutus is an idealist. . . . Moral ideas and principles are more to him than concrete realities; he is studious of self-perfection. . . . Cassius, on the contrary, is by no means studious of moral perfection. He is frankly envious, and hates Cæsar. . . . Julius Cæsar appears in only three scenes of the play. In the first scene of the third act he dies. Where he does appear, the poet seems anxious to insist upon the weakness rather than the strength of Cæsar. . . . In the characters of the *Julius Cæsar* there is a severity of outline; they impose themselves with strict authority upon the imagination; subordinated to the great spirit of Cæsar, the conspirators appear as figures of life-size, but they impress us as no larger than life.

Edward Dowden, 1875-80, *Shakspere, A Critical Study of His Mind and Art*, pp. 249, 251, 253, 272

The style of *Julius Cæsar* is characterized by simplicity and breadth of touch, and each sentence is clear, easy, and flowing, with the thought clothed in perfect and adequate expression: the lines are as limpid as those of *Romeo and Juliet,* but without their remains of rhyme and Italian conceits. Of all Shakespeare's works, none has greater purity of verse or transparent fluency. . . . Nothing perhaps in the whole roll of dramatic poetry equals the tenderness given by Shakespeare to Brutus, that tenderness of a strong nature which the force of contrast renders so touching and so beautiful.

Paul Stapfer, 1880, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity,* tr. Carey, pp. 317, 342

Brutus is one of the noblest and most consistent of Shakespearian creations; a man far above all self-seeking and capable of the loftiest patriotism; in whose whole bearing, as in his deepest nature, virtue wears her noblest aspect. But Brutus is an idealist, with a touch of the doctrinaire; his purposes are of the highest, but the means he employs to give those purposes effect are utterly inadequate; in a lofty spirit he embarks on an enterprise doomed to failure by the very temper and pressure of the age. *Julius Cæsar* is the tragedy of the conflict between a great nature, denied the sense of reality, and the world-spirit. Brutus is not only crushed, but recognizes that there was no other issue of his untimely endeavour.

Hamilton Wright Mabie, 1900, *William Shakespeare, Poet, Dramatist, and Man,* p. 298

Othello (1604)

To set forth a booke without an Epistle, were like to the old English prouerbe, A blew coat without a badge, & the Author being dead, I thought good to take that piece of worke upon mee: To commend it, I will not, for that which is good, I hope euery man will commend, without intreaty: and I am the bolder, because the author's name is sufficient to vent his worke. Thus leauing euery one to the liberty of judgement: I haue ventered to print this play, and leaue it to the generall censure.

Thomas Walkley, 1622, *The Stationer to the Reader,* First Quarto ed.

Whatever rubs or difficulty may stick on the bark, the moral use of this fable is very instructive. First, this may be a caution to all maidens of quality, how, without their parents' consent, they run away with blackamoors. Secondly, this may be a warning to all good wives, that they look well to their linen. Thirdly, this may be a lesson to husbands, that before their jealousy be tragical, the proofs may be mathematical. . . . Whence comes it

then, that this is the top scene; the scene that raises *Othello* above all other tragedies at our theatres? It is purely from the *action;* from the mops and the mows, the grimace, the grins, and gesticulation. Such scenes as this have made all the world run after Harlequin and Scaramoucio. The several degrees of *action* were amongst the ancients distinguished by the cothurnus, the soccus, and the planipes. Had this scene been represented at Old Rome, Othello and Iago must have quitted their buskins; they must have played *barefoot:* for the spectators would not have been content without seeing their podometry; and the jealousy work out at the very toes of them. . . . There is in this play some burlesk, some humour, and ramble of comical wit, some shew, and some *mimicry* to divert the spectators; but the tragical part is clearly none other than a bloody farce, without salt or savour.

Thomas Rymer, 1693, *A Short View of the Tragedy of the Last Age*

Othello must not be conceived as a negro, but a high and chivalrous Moorish chief. Shakspere learned the spirit of the character from the Spanish poetry, which was prevalent in England in his time. Jealousy does not strike me as the point in his passion; I take it to be rather an agony that the creature, whom he had believed angelic, with whom he had garnered up his heart, and whom he could not help still loving, should be proved impure and worthless. It was the struggle *not* to love her. It was a moral indignation and regret that virtue should so fall:—"But yet the *pity* of it, Iago!—O Iago! the *pity* of it, Iago!" In addition to this, his honour was concerned; Iago would not have succeeded but by hinting that his honour was compromised. There is no ferocity in Othello; his mind is majestic and composed. He deliberately determines to die; and speaks his last speech with a view of showing his attachment to the Venetian state, though it had superseded him. Schiller has the material Sublime; to produce an effect, he sets you a whole town on fire, and throws infants with their mothers into the flames, or locks up a father in an old tower. But Shakspere drops a handkerchief and the same or greater effects follow. *Lear* is the most tremendous effort of Shakspere as a poet; *Hamlet* as a philosopher or mediator; and *Othello* is the union of the two. There is something gigantic and unformed in the former two; but in the latter, everything assumes its due place and proportion, and the whole mature powers of his mind are displayed in admirable equilibrium.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1822, *Table Talk, Dec. 29*

Nothing in poetry has ever been written more pathetic than the scene preceding Desdemona's death; I confess I almost always turn away my eyes

from the poor girl with her infinitely touching song of "Willow, willow, willow," and I would fain ask the Poet whether his tragic arrow, which always hits the mark, does not here pierce almost too deeply. I would not call the last word with which she dies a lie, or even a "noble" lie; this qualification has been wretchedly misused. The lie with which Desdemona dies is divine truth, too good to come within the compass of an earthly moral code.

Franz Horn, 1823, *Shakespeare's Schauspiele erlautert,* vol. II

Now what is Othello? He is night. An immense fatal figure. Night is amorous of day. Darkness loves the dawn. The African adores the white woman. Desdemona is Othello's brightness and frenzy! And then how easy to him is jealousy! He is great, he is dignified, he is majestic, he soars above all heads, he has as an escort bravery, battle, the braying of trumpets, the banner of war, renown, glory; he is radiant with twenty victories, he is studded with stars, this Othello: but he is black. And thus how soon, when jealous, the hero becomes monster, the black becomes the negro! How speedily has night beckoned to death! By the side of Othello, who is night, there is Iago, who is evil. Evil, the other form of darkness. Night is but the night of the world; evil is the night of the soul. How deeply black are perfidy and falsehood! To have ink or treason in the veins is the same thing. Whoever has jostled against imposture and perjury knows it. One must blindly grope one's way with roguery. Pour hypocrisy upon the break of day, and you put out the sun, and this, thanks to false religions, happens to God. Iago near Othello is the precipice near the landslip. "This way!" he says in a low voice. The snare advises blindness. The being of darkness guides the black. Deceit talkes upon itself to give what light may be required by night. Jealousy uses falsehood as the blind man his dog. Iago the traitor, opposed to whiteness and candour, Othello the negro, what can be more terrible! These ferocities of the darkness act in unison. These two incarnations of the eclipse comprise together, the one roaring, the other sneering, the tragic suffocation of light.

Victor Hugo, 1864, *William Shakespeare,* tr. Baillot, p. 208

Actors do not comprehend that Shakespeare's greatest villains, Iago among them, have always a touch of conscience. You see the conscience working —therein lies one of Shakespeare's pre-eminences. Iago ought to be acted as the "honest Iago," not the stage villain; he is the essentially jealous man, not Othello.

Alfred Lord Tennyson, 1883, "Some Criticisms on Poets," *Memoir by His Son,* vol. II, p. 292

Macbeth (1605-6)

Macbeth wants no disguise of his natural disposition, for it is not bad; he does not affect more piety than he has: on the contrary, a part of his distress arises from a real sense of religion: which makes him regret that he could not join the chamberlains in prayer for God's blessing, and bewail that he has "given his eternal jewel to the common enemy of man." He continually reproaches himself for his deeds; no use can harden him: confidence cannot silence, and even despair cannot stifle, the cries of his conscience. By the first murder he put "rancours in the vessel of his peace;" and of the last he owns to Macduff, "My soul is too much charg'd with blood of thine already."

Thomas Whately, 1785-1839, *Remarks on Some Characters of Shakespere,* p. 89

Who could exhaust the praise of this sublime work? Since *The Furies* of Æschylus, nothing so grand and terrible has even been composed. The Witches are not, it is true, divine Eumenides, and are not intended to be so: they are ignoble and vulgar instruments of hell. A German poet therefore very ill understood their meaning, when he transformed them into mongrel beings a mixture of fates, furies, and enchantresses, and clothed them with tragical dignity. Let no man lay hand on Shakspeare's works to change anything essential in them; he will be sure to punish himself.

Augustus William Schlegel, 1809, *Dramatic Art and Literature,* tr. Black, Lecture XII

Macbeth (generally speaking) is done upon a stronger and more systematic principle of contrast than any other of Shakespear's plays. It moves upon the verge of an abyss, and is a constant struggle between life and death. The action is desperate and the reaction is dreadful. It is a huddling together of fierce extremes, a war of opposite natures which of them shall destroy the other. There is nothing but what has a violent end or violent beginnings. The lights and shades are laid on with a determined hand; the transitions from triumph to despair, from the height of terror to the repose of death, are sudden and startling; every passion brings in its fellow-contrary, and the thoughts pitch and jostle against each other as in dark. The whole play is an unruly chaos of strange and forbidden things, where the ground rocks under out feet. Shakespear's genius here took its full swing, and trod upon the farthest bounds of nature and passion. This circumstance will account for the abruptness and violent antitheses of the style, the throes and labour which run through the expression, and from defects will turn them into beauties.

William Hazlitt, 1817-69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays,* p. 17

How admirably Macduff's grief is in harmony with the whole play! It rends, not dissolves, the heart. "The tune of it goes manly." Thus is Shakspere always master of himself and of his subject,—a genuine Proteus:—we see all things in him as images in a calm lake, most distinct, most accurate—only more splendid, more glorified. This is correctness in the only philosophical sense. But he requires your sympathy and your submission; you must have that recipiency of moral impression without which the purposes and ends of the drama would be frustrated, and the absence of which demonstrates an utter want of all imagination, a deadness to that necessary pleasure of being innocently—shall I say, deluded?—or rather, drawn away from ourselves to the music of noblest thought in harmonious sounds. Happy he, who not only in the public theatre, but in the labours of a profession, and round the light of his own hearth, still carries a heart so pleasure-fraught!

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1818, *Lectures and Notes on Shakspere*, ed. Ashe, p. 379

From my boyish days I had always felt a great perplexity on one point in *Macbeth*. It was this:—The knocking at the gate which succeeds to the murder of Duncan produced to my feelings an effect for which I never could account. The effect was that it reflected back upon the murder a peculiar awfulness and a depth of solemnity; yet, however obstinately I endeavored with my understanding to comprehend this, for many years I never could see *why* it should produce such an effect. . . . At length I solved it to my own satisfaction; and my solution is this:—Murder, in ordinary cases, where the sympathy is wholly directed to the case of the murdered person, is an incident of coarse and vulgar horror; and for this reason,—that it flings the interest exclusively upon the natural but ignoble instinct by which we cleave to life: an instinct which, as being indispensable to the primal law of self-preservation, is the same in kind (though different in degree) amongst all living creatures. This instinct, therefore, because it annihilates all distinctions, and degrades the greatest of men to the level of the "poor beetle that we tread on," exhibits human nature in its most abject and humiliating attitude. Such an attitude would little suit the purposes of the poet. What then must he do? He must throw the interest on the murderer. Our sympathy must be with *him* (of course I mean a sympathy of comprehension, a sympathy by which we enter into his feelings, and are made to understand them,—not a sympathy of pity or approbation). In the murdered person, all strife of thought, all flux and reflux of passion and of purpose, are crushed by one overwhelming panic; the fear of instant death smites him "with its petrific mace." But in the murderer, such a murderer as a poet will condescend to, there must be raging some great

storm of passion,—jealousy, ambition, vengeance, hatred,—which will create a hell within him; and into this hell we are to look.

Thomas De Quincey, 1823-60, "On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*," *Collected Writings*, ed. Masson, vol. X, pp. 385, 391

I regard the tragedy of *Macbeth* upon the whole, as the greatest treasure of our dramatic literature. We may look, as Britons, at Greek sculpture and at Italian paintings, with a humble consciousness that our native art has never reached their perfection; but, in the drama, we can confront Æschylus himself with Shakespeare; and of all modern theatres, *ours* alone can compete with the Greek in the unborrowed nativeness and sublimity of its superstition. In the grandeur of tragedy, *Macbeth* has no parallel, till we go back to the *Prometheus and the Furies* of the Attic stage. I could even produce, if it were not digressing too far from my subject, innumerable instances of striking similarity between the metaphorical mintage of Shakespeare's and of Æschylus's style,—a similarity, both in beauty and the fault of excess, that, unless the contrary had been proved, would lead me to suspect our great dramatist to have been a studious Greek scholar. But their resemblance arose only from the consanguinity of nature.

Thomas Campbell, 1834, *Life of Mrs. Siddons*, vol. II, p. 6

This play has more the air of being a draft, if not unfinished, yet requiring to be retouched and written more in full by its author, than any other of his greater works. Full of incident as it is, it is still one of the shortest of the plays. Like *The Tempest* in this respect, we feel that it would be better if it were longer. We want more of the subdued and calm. There are also more passages than in other plays which seem to be carried beyond the just limits which part the true sublime from the inflated or the obscure,—passages which we may suppose to have been in the mind of Johnson when he said of the soaring genius of Shakespeare, *"sufflaminandus est."* What might not *Macbeth* have been had the Poet been induced to sit down with the play, as it now is, before him, and to direct upon it the full force of his judgment and fine taste, removing here and there a too luxuriant expression, and giving us here and there a breadth of verdure on which the mind might find a momentary repose, and refresh itself amidst the multitude of exciting incidents which come in too rapid a succession upon us!

Joseph Hunter, 1845, *New Illustrations of the Life, Studies and Writings of Shakespeare*, vol. II, p. 158

It is, in fact, a powerful psychological study. Shakespeare depicts a state of mind not only novel, but highly dramatic. He has given us hardened villains, before, in his other pieces. But here he unveils the process by which

the thought of crime penetrates a virtuous soul, the destruction it causes as soon as it gains lodgement there, and to what extremites it drags him who has not had strength enough to repel on its first appearance. Macbeth is not wicked like Iago, or Edmund in *Lear*. He even begins well. He has defended his country and his king most zealously, and covered himself with glory on two battle-fields. His comrades in arms accord him ungrudging praise, and Duncan knows not how to recompense his deserts. But this brave soldier bears within him the germ of ambition; and, without as yet knowing the height of his aspirations, without even defining to himself his vague desires, he awakes to a simultaneous consciousness of his own power and the temptation to make trial of it.

A. Mézières, 1860, *Shakespeare, ses Œuvres et ses Critiques*

It is the prospective and retrospective representation of Macbeth's remorse that constitutes the element of horror in the play. Almost as much pity is felt for the murderer as for his victim. The true title of the tragedy might be, crime, remorse, and expiation. Lady Macbeth alone appears to stand outside of the pale of morality, but her life ends before the expiatory death of her husband, whose daring villainy, incapable of plotting or of enduring the crime, is unable to submit to its punishment. All the great crimes in Shakespeare are inspired by wicked women; men may execute, but cannot conceive them. The creature of sentiment is more depraved than the man of crime. The imagination of woman dallies more easily with crime than the hand of man is raised against his victim. We feel that in committing the murder Macbeth succumbed to a strength of depravity superior to his own. This strength of depravity is the ardent imagination of his wife. . . . Such is *Macbeth!* It is Crime! It is Remorse! It is the weakness of a strong man opposed to the seductions of a perverted and passionate woman! Above all, it is the immediate expiation of crime by the secret vengeance of God! Herein lies the invincible morality of Shakespeare. The Poet is in harmony with God.

Alphonse Marie Louis de Lamartine, 1865,
Shakespeare et son Œuvre

The popular misunderstanding of the character of Macbeth is due, probably, to the description his wife gives of him in the first interview we have with her. . . . "Yet do I fear thy nature," etc. But it is obvious that so far as we see Macbeth in the play, nothing could be wider of the mark than this estimate of him. . . . For nothing can be farther from the truth than the popular view of Lady Macbeth. That wonderful characteristic of genius, which enables it to put on the character it conceives, reaches its highest manifestation in this marvellous portrait. . . . But all the truth and force

of the delineation are lost when Lady Macbeth is regarded as a mere tempter and fiend. She is, in reality, nothing of the kind. Her part is simply that of a woman and a wife who shares her husband's ambition and supports him in it. So far from suggesting his crimes, she distinctly declares that he broke the enterprise to her. . . . We have seen that, before he saw his wife, Macbeth had made up his mind to this first step in his career of crime. All that she does is to back him in the execution of his own design.

P. W. Clayden, 1867, "Macbeth and Lady Macbeth," *Fortnightly Review,* vol. 8, pp. 163, 164

The history of Macbeth is the story of a moral poisoning. Frank, sociable, and generous, though tainted from the first by base and ambitious thoughts, he is urged on to his ruin by the prophetic warnings of the witches, by golden opportunity, and the instigations of his wife. He has physical but lacks moral courage. The suggestion of a possible crown haunts him. He struggles, but he is a lion in the toils. He feels the resistless traction of fate, sees himself on the verge of an abyss, and his brain is filled with phantoms.

Alfred H. Welsh, 1882, *Development of English Literature and Language,* vol. I, p. 384

I confess that this play seems to me one of Shakespeare's less interesting efforts; not from the artistic, but from the purely human point of view. It is a rich, highly moral melodrama; but only at occasional points in it do I feel the beating of Shakespeare's heart. My comparative coolness of feeling towards *Macbeth* may possibly be due in a considerable degree to the shamefully mutilated form in which this tragedy has been handed down to us. Who knows what it may have been when it came from Shakespeare's own hand! The text we possess, which was not printed till long after the poet's death, is clipped, pruned, and compressed for acting purposes. We can feel distinctly where the gaps occur, but that is of no avail. . . . Shakespeare has employed in the treatment of this subject a style that suits it—vehement to violence, compressed to congestion—figures treading upon each other's heels.

George Brandes, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study,* vol. II, pp. 99, 101

King Lear (1605-6)

Nothing but the Power of your Perswasion, and my Zeal for all the Remains of *Shakespear,* cou'd have wrought me to so bold an Undertaking. I found that the New-modelling of this Story, wou'd force me sometimes on the

difficult Task of making the chiefest Persons speak something like their Character, on Matter whereof I had no Ground in my Author. *Lear's* real and *Edgar's* pretended Madness have so much of *extravagant Nature* (I know not how else to express it) as cou'd never have started but from our *Shakespear's* Creating Fancy. The Images and Language are so odd and surprizing, and yet so agreeable and proper, that whilst we grant that none but *Shakespear* cou'd have form'd such Conceptions; yet we are satisfied that they were the only Things in the World that ought to be said on those Occasions.

Nahum Tate, 1681, *The History of King Lear,* Dedication

King Lear is an admirable tragedy . . . as Shakespeare wrote it; but as it is reformed according to the chimerical notion of poetical justice, in my humble opinion it has lost half its beauty.

Joseph Addison, 1711, *The Spectator,* no. 40, April 16

Lear does not run mad till the third Act; yet his behaviour towards Cordelia in the first scene has all the appearance of a judgment totally depraved. . . . Lear banishes (Cordelia) his sight, consigns her over to want, and loads her with the deepest imprecations. What less than Phrenzy can inspire a rage so groundless, and a conduct so absurd? Lear, while in his senses, acts like a madman, and from his first appearance to his last seems to be wholly deprived of his reason.

Charlotte Lennox, 1753-54, *Shakespear Illustrated,* vol. III, p. 287

Were Lear alone to suffer from his daughters, the impression would be limited to the powerful compassion felt by us for his private misfortune. But two such unheard of examples taking place at the same time have the appearance of a great commotion in the moral world: the picture becomes gigantic, and fills us with such alarm as we should entertain at the idea that the heavenly bodies might one day fall out of their regular orbits.

Augustus William Schlegel, 1809, *Dramatic Art and Literature,* tr. Black, Lecture XII

So to see Lear acted,—to see an old man tottering about the stage with a walking-stick, turned out of doors by his daughters in a rainy night, has nothing in it but what is painful and disgusting. We want to take him into shelter and relieve him. That is all the feeling which the acting of *Lear* ever produced in me. But the *Lear* of Shakespeare cannot be acted. The contemptible machinery by which they mimic the storm which he goes out in, is not more inadequate to represent the horrors of the real elements, than any actor can be to represent Lear; they might more easily propose to

personate the Satan of Milton upon a stage, or one of Michael Angelo's terrible figures. The greatness of Lear is not in corporal dimension, but in intellectual: the explosions of passion are terrible as a volcano: they are storms turning up and disclosing to the bottom that sea his mind, with all its vast riches. It is his mind which is laid bare. This case of flesh and blood seems too insignificant to be thought on; even as he himself neglects it. On the stage we see nothing but corporal infirmities and weakness, the impotence of rage; while we read it, we see not Lear, but we are Lear,—we are in his mind, we are sustained by a grandeur which baffles the malice of daughters and storms; in the aberrations of his reason, we discover a mighty irregular power of reasoning, immethodized from the ordinary purposes of life, but exerting its powers, as the wind blows where it listeth, at will upon the corruptions and abuses of mankind.

Charles Lamb, 1810(?), *On the Tragedies of Shakespeare*

It is then the best of all Shakespear's plays, for it is the one in which he was the most in earnest. He was here fairly caught in the web of his own imagination. The passion which he has taken as his subject is that which strikes its root deepest into the human heart, of which the bond is the hardest to be unloosed; and the cancelling and tearing to pieces of which gives the greatest revulsion to the frame. This depth of nature, this force of passion, this tug and war of the elements of our being, this firm faith in filial piety, and the giddy anarchy and whirling tumult of the thoughts at finding this prop failing it, the contrast between the fixed, immoveable basis of natural affection, and the rapid, irregular starts of imagination, suddenly wrenched from all its accustomed holds and resting-places in the soul, this is what Shakespear has given, and what nobody else but he could give.

William Hazlitt, 1817-69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, p. 108

Of all Shakspere's plays *Macbeth* is the most rapid, *Hamlet* the slowest, in movement. *Lear* combines length with rapidity,—like the hurricane and the whirlpool, absorbing while it advances. It begins as a stormy day in summer, with brightness; but that brightness is lurid, and anticipates the tempest.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1818, *Lectures and Notes on Shakspere*, ed. Ashe, p. 329

The modern practice of blending comedy with tragedy, though liable to great abuse in point of practice, is undoubtedly an extension of the dramatic circle; but the comedy should be as in *King Lear*, universal, ideal, and sublime. It is perhaps the intervention of this principle which determines the balance in favour of *King Lear* against *Œdipus Tyrannus* or the

Agamemnon, or, if you will, the trilogies with which they are connected; unless the intense power of the choral poetry, especially that of the latter, should be considered as restoring the equilibrium. *King Lear,* if it can sustain this comparison, may be judged to be the most perfect specimen of the dramatic art existing in the world; in spite of the narrow conditions to which the poet was subjected by the ignorance of the philosophy of the drama which has prevailed in modern Europe.

Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1821, *A Defence of Poetry, Works,* ed. Forman, vol. III, p. 114

Goethe has pronounced the first scene absurd. More recent criticism, certainly in view of that judgment harsh, but not without reason, has defended it as unobjectionable, but yet hardly with a convincing, decisive result. . . . It appears to me that Shakespeare here, in giving motive and a dramatic form to the legend, is lacking in his usual care. This want is assuredly considerably alleviated by the excellent elucidations of the scenes that follow. But the satisfaction subsequently afforded to the understanding cannot be any compensation to us if the imagination has previously had just reason to be offended.

F. Kreyssig, 1862, *Vorlesungen über Shakespeare,* vol. II, p. 316

King Lear is, indeed, the greatest single achievement in poetry of the Teutonic, or Northern, genius. By its largeness of conception and the variety of its details, by its revelation of a harmony existing between the forces of nature and the passions of man, by its grotesqueness and its sublimity, its own kinship with the great cathedrals of Gothic architecture. To conceive, to compass, to comprehend, at once in its stupendous unity and in its almost endless variety, a building like the cathedral of Rheims, or that of Cologne, is a feat which might seem to defy the most athletic imagination. But the impression which Shakspere's tragedy produces, while equally large —almost monstrous—and equally intricate, lacks the material fixity and determinateness of that produced by these great works in stone. Everything in the tragedy is in motion, and the motion is that of a tempest.

Edward Dowden, 1875-80, *Shakspere, A Critical Study of His Mind and Art,* p. 229

King Lear deals especially with the natural man as opposed to the artificial man. When the King saw Edgar, then a Tom o' Bedlam, in the great storm scene, he exclaims—"Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou owest the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha! here's three on 's (himself, the Fool, Kent) are sophisticated! Thou art the thing itself: unaccomodated man is no more but such a poor,

bare, forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings! Come; unbutton here." And he tears his clothes off him. And this bare-stripped figure, in that awful scene, may serve as an image of the society the play represents. It is a society with all its disguises torn off. The passions walk abroad, bold and confident. Greed lifts up its head unabashed; Lust scorns all holy ties; Wrath rages like a tempest. A fearful earth, indeed, if given over to such accursed powers! But it is not so. There is also the passion of Love, and throughout the play love is performing its secret ministry. Good and evil close in a fierce struggle, as always where there is life, and not mere death; and in the end good prevails, as in the end it must prevail: for evil has not only good to encounter, but it has to fight with itself: it is essentially self-consuming. So that in this play we have presented to us humanity in its purest and simplest elements—humanity unsophisticated, denuded of all its "lendings," with its natural impulses all unchecked and potent.

John W. Hales, 1875-84, *Notes and Essays on Shakespeare,* p. 252

Troilus and Cressida (1606-7; 1602)*

A NEVER WRITER TO AN EVER READER. NEWS. Eternal reader, you have here a new play, never staled with the stage, never clapper-clawed with the palms of the vulgar, and yet passing full of the palm comical; for it is a birth of your brain, that never undertook anything comical vainly; and were but the vain names of comedies changed for the titles of commodities, or of plays for pleas, you should see all those grand censors, that now style them such vanities, flock to them for the main grace of their gravities; especially this author's comedies, that are so framed to the life, that they serve for the most common commentaries of all the actions of our lives, showing such a dexterity and power of wit, that the most displeased with plays are pleased with his comedies. . . . Amongst all there is none more witty than this: and had I time I would comment upon it, though I know it needs not (for so much as will make you think your testern well bestowed), but for so much worth as even poor I know to be stuffed in it. It deserves such a labour, as well as the best comedy in Terence or Plautus. And believe this, that when he is gone, and his comedies out of sale, you will scramble for them, and set up a new English Inquistion. Take this for a warning, and at the peril of your pleasures' loss and judgments, refuse not, nor like this the less for not being sullied with the smoky breath of the multitude; but thank fortune for the scape it hath made amongst you, since by the grand possessors' wills I believe you should have prayed for them rather than been prayed. And so I leave all such to be prayed for (for the states of their wit's healths) that will not praise it. Vale.

Preface to First Edition, 1609

*See note on page 181.

The Poet Æschylus was held in the same veneration by the Athenians of after Ages as Shakespear is by us; . . . though the difficulties of altering are greater, and our reverence for Shakespear much more just, than that of the Grecians for Æschylus. . . . Yet it must be allowed to the present age, that the tongue in general is so much refined since Shakespear's time, that many of his words, and more of his phrases, are scarce intelligible. And of those which we understand, some are ungrammatical, others coarse; and his whole stile is so pestered with figurative expressions, that it is as affected as it is obscure. It is true, that in his latter plays he had worn off somewhat of the rust; but the tragedy, which I have undertaken to correct, was in all probability one of his first endeavors on the stage. . . . Shakespeare (as I hinted), in the apprenticeship of his writing, modeled it into that play, which is now called by the name of *Troilus and Cressida;* but so lamely is it left to us, that it is not divided into acts; which fault I ascribe to the actors who printed it after Shakespear's death; and that too so carelessly, that a more uncorrect copy I never saw. For the play itself, the author seems to have begun it with some fire; the characters of Pandarus and Thersites are promising enough; but as if he grew weary of his task, after an entrance or two, he lets them fall: and the latter part of the tragedy is nothing but a confusion of drums and trumpets, excursions and alarms. The chief persons, who give name to the tragedy, are left alive: Cressida is false, and is not punished. Yet, after all, because the play was Shakespear's, and that there appeared in some places of it the admirable genius of the author, I undertook to remove that heap of rubbish under which many excellent thoughts lay wholly buried.

John Dryden, 1679, *Troilus and Cressida*, Preface, *Works*, ed. Scott and Saintsbury, vol. VI, pp. 254, 255

The historical play of *Troilus and Cressida* exhibits as full a specimen of the different styles in which this wonderful writer was qualified to excel, as is to be found in any of his works. . . . The great beauty of this play, as it is of all the genuine writings of Shakespear, beyond all didactic morality, beyond all mere flights of fancy, and beyond all sublime, a beauty entirely his own, and in which no writer ancient or modern can enter into competition with him, is that his men are men; his sentiments are living, and his characters marked with those delicate, evanescent, undefinable touches which identify them with the great delineations of nature. . . . The whole catalogue of the *dramatis personæ* in the play of *Troilus and Cressida,* so far as they depend upon a rich and original vein of humour in the author, are drawn with a felicity which never was surpassed. The genius of Homer has been a topic of admiration to almost every generation of men since the period in which he wrote. But his characters will not bear the slightest com-

parison with the delineation of the same characters as they stand in Shakespeare.

William Godwin, 1803, *Life of Geoffrey Chaucer,*
vol. I, pp. 503, 505, 509

There is no one of Shakspere's plays harder to characterize. . . . I am half inclined to believe, that Shakspere's main object, or shall I rather say, his ruling impulse, was to translate the poetic heroes of paganism into the not less rude, but more intellectually vigorous, and more *featurely,* warriors of Christian chivalry—and to substantiate the distinct and graceful profiles or outlines of the Homeric epic into the flesh and blood of the romantic drama,—in short, to give a grand history-piece in the robust style of Albert Durer.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1818, *Lectures and Notes on Shakspere,*
ed. Ashe, pp. 306, 308

The play is, in all respects, a very remarkable and singular reproduction; and it has perplexed many a critic, not, as usual, by smaller difficulties of readings and interpretation, but by doubts as to the author's design and spirit. Its beauties are of the highest order. It contains passages fraught with moral truth and political wisdom—high truths, in large and philosophical discourse, such as remind us of the loftiest disquisitions of Hooker, or Jeremy Taylor, on the foundations of social law. . . . Nor is there any drama more rich in variety and truth of character. . . . With all this, there is large alloy of inferior matter, such as Shakespeare too often permitted himself to use, in filling up the chasms of the scene, between loftier and brighter thoughts. More especially is there felt, by every reader, a sense of disappointment at the unsatisfactory effect of the whole, arising mainly from the want of unity in that effect, and in the interest of the plot —at the desultory and purposeless succession of incident and dialogue, all resembling (as Walter Scott well observes) "a legend, or a chronicle, rather than a dramatic composition."

Gulian Crommelin Verplanck, 1844-47, ed.
The Illustrated Shakespeare

This is the most difficult of all Shakspere's plays to deal with, as well for date as position. . . . The play is evidently written in ill-humour with mankind; it is a bitter satire. Its purpose is not to show virtue her own feature, but contemptible weakness, paltry vanity, falsehood (like scorn), their own image. . . . Shakspere's treatment of Chaucer's heroine, Cressida, is, too, a shock to any lover of the early poet's work. To have the beautiful Cressida, hesitating, palpitating like the nightingale, before her sin; driven

by force of hard circumstances which she could not control into unfaithfulness to her love; to have this Cressida, whom Chaucer spared for very ruth, set before us as a mere shameless wanton, making eyes at all the men she sees, and showing her looseness in the movement of every limb, is a terrible blow. But whatever may have been Shakspere's motive in this play, we certainly have in it his least pleasing production. There is no relief to the patchery, the jugglery, and the knavery, except the generous welcome of Nestor to Hector in the Grecian camp, and his frank praise of the gallant Trojan, who, labouring for Destiny, made cruel way through ranks of Greekish youth.

Frederick James Furnivall, 1877, ed. *The Leopold Shakspere*

The point of special import and significance is that Shakespeare *always* shows a predilection for the Trojans, while the Greeks find but little favour in his sight. This undoubted bias on his part exhibits itself in an especially lively manner, and has widest scope, in *Troilus and Cressida*. There are far grander works amongst Shakespeare's plays, but there is none more curious,—there is none that affords more matter for reflection and commentary in the realms, not only of learning and of history, but also of æthetics, than does *Troilus and Cressida*.

Paul Stapfer, 1880, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity*, tr. Carey, p. 157

It was a curious coincidence that Shakespeare should lay hands on this material just at the most despondent period of his life; for nowhere could we well receive a deeper impression of modern crudeness and decadence, and never could we meet with a fuller expression of German-Gothic innate barbarism in relation to Hellenism than when we see this great poet of the Northern Renaissance make free with the poetry of the old world.

Georg Brandes, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study*, vol. II, p. 206

Antony and Cleopatra (1606-7; 1607-8)*

The highest praise, or rather form of praise, of this play, which I can offer in my own mind, is the doubt which the perusal always occasion in me, whether the *Anthony and Cleopatra* is not, in all exhibitions of a giant power in its strength and vigour of maturity, a formidable rival of *Macbeth, Lear, Hamlet,* and *Othello*. . . . Of all Shakspere's historical plays, *Antony and Cleopatra* is by far the most wonderful. There is not one in which he

*See note on page 181.

has followed history so minutely, and yet there are few in which he impresses the notion of angelic strength so much;—perhaps none in which he impresses it more strongly. This is greatly owing to the manner in which the fiery force is sustained throughout, and to the numerous momentary flashes of nature counteracting the historic abstraction. As a wonderful specimen of the way in which Shakspere lives up to the very end of this play, read the last part of the concluding scene. And if you would feel the judgment as well as the genius of Shakspere in your hearts' core, compare this astonishing drama with Dryden's *All For Love.*

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1818, *Lectures and Notes on Shakspere,* ed. Ashe, pp. 315, 316

The greatest moment of his dramatic subtlety is the tragedy of *Antony and Cleopatra.* With all its noble bursts of passion and occasional splendour of description, this play has not perhaps the massive breadth of feeling and overpowering interest of the four great tragedies, *Macbeth, Hamlet, Lear,* and *Othello;* but it is greater even than *Macbeth* and *Othello* in the range of its mastery over the fluctuations of profound passion: it is the greatest of Shakespeare's plays in the dramatist's greatest faculty. The conflict of motives in *Hamlet* is an achievement of genius that must always be regarded with wonder and reverence; but, to my mind, *Antony and Cleopatra* is the dramatist's masterpiece. One may have less interest in the final end of the subtle changes wrought in the hero and heroine: but in the pursuit and certain grasp of those changes, Shakespeare's dramatic genius appears at its supreme height.

William Minto, 1874-85, *Characteristics of English Poets,* p. 318

On *Antony and Cleopatra* Shakspere has poured out the glory of his genius in profusion, and makes us stand by, saddened and distressed, as the noble Antony sinks to his ruin, under the gorgeous colouring of the Eastern sky, the vicious splendour of the Egyptian queen; makes us look with admiring hate on the wonderful picture he has drawn, certainly far the most wonderful study of woman he has left us, of that Cleopatra of whom Enobarbus, who knew her every turn, said,

> Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
> Her infinite variety; other women
> Cloy the appetites they feed, but she makes hungry
> Where most she satisfies.

That in her, the dark woman of Shakspere's *Sonnets,* his own fickle, serpent-like, attractive mistress, is to some extent embodied, I do not doubt. What a superbly sumptuous picture, as if painted by Veronese or Titian, is that where Cleopatra first met Antony upon the river of Cydnus! How admirably

transferred from Plutarch's prose! And how that fatal inability to say "No" to woman shows us Antony's weakness and the cause of his final fall.

Frederick James Furnivall, 1877, ed. *The Leopold Shakspere,* Introduction to the Play

Coriolanus (1607-8)

The Tragedy of *Coriolanus* is one of the most amusing of our author's performances. The old man's merriment in Menenius; the lofty lady's dignity in Volumnia; the bridal modesty in Vergilia; the patrician and military haughtiness in Coriolanus; the plebian malignity and tribunitian insolence in Brutus and Sicinius, make a very pleasing and interesting variety; and the various revolutions of the hero's fortune, fill the mind with anxious curiosity. There is perhaps too much bustle in the first act, and too little in the last.

Samuel Johnson, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays*

The subject of *Coriolanus* is the ruin of a noble life through the sin of pride. If duty be the dominant ideal with Brutus, and pleasure of a magnificent kind be the ideal of Antony and Cleopatra, that which gives tone and colour to Coriolanus is an ideal of self-centered power. The greatness of Brutus is altogether that of the moral conscience; his external figure does not dilate upon the world through a golden haze like that of Antony, nor bulk massively and tower like that of Coriolanus. Brutus venerates his ideals, and venerates himself; but this veneration of self is in a certain sense disinterested. A haughty and passionate personal feeling, a superb egoism, are with Coriolanus the sources of weakness and of strength.

Edward Dowden, 1875-80, *Shakspere: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art,* p. 282

There is more unity in the tragedy of *Coriolanus* than in either of the other Roman plays; yet, grand and powerful as it is, its tragical interest is less than that of *Julius Cæsar,* and its poetical merit less than that of *Antony and Cleopatra.* There is something hard about it, both in sentiment and in style. The delineation of social and personal pride is not a subject to evoke much sympathy or emotion, and although it may in its course reach sublime heights, its sublimity is wholly independent of moral greatness. Of all Shakespeare's greater works, this is the most difficult to construe; the unintelligibility of several passages is doubtless due to some corruption of the text, but besides this, the general style is exceedingly obscure, and overloaded with metaphorical and elliptical expressions. Even the great scene between Coriolanus and his mother is not of uniform excellence.

Paul Stapfer, 1880, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity,* tr. Carey, p. 454

Coriolanus was directly derived from Sir Thomas North's famous version of Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans,* the book to which Shakespeare was indebted also for his *Julius Cæsar, Antony and Cleopatra,* and, to some extent, for *Timon of Athens,* and which has been fittingly described as "most sovereign in its dominion over the minds of great men in all ages." North's monumental version is one of the masterpieces of English prose, and no better proof exists than a comparison of the play with its original. Shakespeare has borrowed North's very vocabulary, and many of his most striking effects; so closely does he follow the whole history that North's prose may actually assist in restoring a defective passage.

Israel Gollancz, 1896, ed. *Temple Shakespeare, Coriolanus,* Preface

Timon of Athens (1607-8)

Timon of Athens always appeared to us to be written with as intense a feeling of his subject as any one play of Shakespear. It is one of the few in which he seems to be in earnest throughout, never to trifle nor go out of his way. He does not relax in his efforts, nor lose sight of the unity of his design. It is the only play of our author in which spleen is the predominant feeling of the mind. It is as much a satire as a play: and contains some of the finest pieces of invective possible to be conceived, both in the snarling, captious answers of the cynic Apemantus, and in the impassioned and more terrible imprecations of Timon.

William Hazlitt, 1817-69, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays,* p. 44

The principle which we seek to establish, namely, that the *Timon of Athens* was a play originally produced by an artist very inferior to Shakspere, and which probably retained possession of the stage for some time in its first form; that it has come down to us not only re-written, but so far re-modelled that entire scenes of Shakspere have been substituted for entire scenes of the elder play; and lastly, that this substitution has been almost wholly confined to the character of Timon, and that in the development of that character alone, with the exception of some few occasional touches here and there, we must look for the unity of the Shaksperean conception of the Greek Misanthropos—the Timon of Aristophanes and Lucian and Plutarch —"the enemy to mankind," of the popular story books—of the "Pleasant Histories and excellent Novels," which were greedily devoured by the contemporaries of the boyish Shakspere.

Charles Knight, 1849, *Studies of Shakspere,* bk. ii, ch. iv, p. 70

The play is, however, one of the less celebrated and less attractive among Shakespeare's works. The theme itself is not the most enticing, and its treatment must be pronounced to be in many respects unsatisfactory. The in-

equality of the execution will be acknowledged by every careful reader. Some parts are wrought out with great skill and completeness; others are hastily and rudely sketched, while certain necessary links seem to be omitted altogether. The versification is often a mystery, and the prose frequently appears to be written with exceeding carelessness. But the main characteristic of the play is the dark coloring in which it portrays social life. Its speech is steeped in bitterness; it contains the most vindictive utterances against mankind to be found in Shakespeare. A noble, generous character is victimized to the last degree, and driven forward to suicide. Unselfishness apparently becomes tragic in a selfish world. Still the other side is not neglected; this very unselfishness is seen to be at bottom selfish. Timon is guilty, and has to take the consequences of his deed. He turns misanthrope, full of vehement sarcasm and red-hot imprecation. The latter part of the play, in particular, is a bath of gall.

Denton Jaques Snider, 1887, *The Shakespearian Drama, The Tragedies,* p. 13

Pericles (1608)

This tragedy, I think, exhibits no equitable claim to be regarded as a work of Shakspeare's, any more than that with which it is most worthily associated, in the same volume, *Titus Andronicus*. If one of these compositions is ludicrously shocking, the other is shockingly ludicrous; and the poet's reputation, I believe, would have been better consulted, by dismissing them both to contempt and oblivion.

E. H. Seymour, 1805, *Remarks on Shakspeare,* vol. II, p. 436

However wild and extravagant the fable of *Pericles* may appear, if we consider its numerous choruses, its pageantry, and dumb shows, its continual succession of incidents, and the great length of time which they occupy, yet is it, we may venture to assert, the most spirited and pleasing specimen of the nature and fabric of our earliest romantic drama which we possess, and the more valuable, as it is the only one with which Shakspeare has favoured us. . . . From the extensive survey which has now been taken of the merits and supposed era of this early drama, the reader, it is probable, will gather sufficient data for concluding that by far the greater part of it issued from the pen of Shakspeare, that it was his first dramatic production, that it appeared towards the close of the year 1590, and that it deserves to be removed from the Appendix to the editions of Shakspeare, where it has hitherto appeared, and incorporated in the body of his works.

Nathan Drake, 1817, *Shakspeare and His Times,* vol. II, pp. 266-286

Though it contains one fine scene and many scattered beauties, the play is a bad one; it is destitute of reality and art, and is entirely alien to Shakspeare's system: it is interesting only as marking the point from which he started; and it seems to belong to his works as a last monument of that which he overthrew—as a remnant of that anti-dramatic scaffolding for which he was about to substitute the presence and movement of vitality.

François Pierre Guillaume Guizot, 1821-52,
Shakspeare and His Times, p. 67

If it be the work of Shakspere, the foundations of it were laid when his art was imperfect, and he laboured somewhat in subjection to the influence of those ruder models for which he eventually substituted his own splendid examples of dramatic excellence.

Charles Knight, 1849, *Studies of Shakspere*, bk. ii, ch. ii, p. 53

The Two Noble Kinsmen (1609)

This play is said to have been written by Shakespear and Fletcher, a circumstance which the editor of Beaumont and Fletcher seems to be greatly concerned about, probably out of tenderness for the reputation of Fletcher, but he need not have made himself in the smallest degree uneasy, for the play itself sufficiently proves that Shakespear had no hand in it. Indeed there is not much reputation to be claimed by any body, for the story is Chaucer's "Knights Tale," which we have seen already treated by Edwards to the great delight of queen Elizabeth. There is something, however, gaudy and fine in it; and, like most of the works of Beaumont and Fletcher, it resembles a parterre appearing so full of colours that form, and symmetry are not once thought of.

Charles Dibdin, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage*,
vol. III, p. 209

The play is of no particular value; it is far inferior to Fletcher's best work, and not to be compared with any of Shakespeare's completed dramas. Nevertheless, many eminent critics of this century have found distinct traces in this play of the styles of both greater and lesser poet.

Georg Brandes, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study*,
vol. II, p. 310

The Tempest (1610; 1611)*

November 7.—At noon resolved with Sir W. Pen to go see *The Tempest*, an old play of Shakespeare's, acted, I hear, the first day. . . . The house mighty

*See note on page 181.

full; the King and Court there: and the most innocent play that I ever saw; and a curious piece of musique in an echo of half sentences, the echo repeating the former half, while the man goes on to the latter; which is mighty pretty. The play [has] no great wit, but yet good, above ordinary plays.

Samuel Pepys, 1667, *Diary and Correspondence*

No man ever drew so many characters, or generally distinguished em' better from one another, excepting only *Johnson:* I will instance but in one, to show the copiousness of his invention; 'tis that of "Calyban," or the monster in *The Tempest.* He seems there to have created a person which was not in Nature, a boldness which at first sight would appear intolerable; for he makes him a species of himself, begotten by an "Incubus" on a Witch; but this, as I have elsewhere prov'd, is not wholly beyond the bounds of credibility, at least the vulgar stile believe it. We have the separated notions of a spirit and of a witch; (and spirits, according to "Plato," are vested with a subtil body; according to some of his followers, have different sexes) therefore as from the distinct apprehensions of a horse, and of a man, Imagination has form'd a "Centaur," so from those of an "Incubus" and a "Sorceress," *Shakespear* has produc'd his Monster. Whether or no his generation can be defended, I leave to Philosophy; but of this I am certain, the Poet has most judiciously furnish'd him with a person, a language, and a character which will suit him both by Father's and Mother's side: he has all the discontents and malice of a Witch, and of a Devil; besides a convenient proportion of the deadly sins; Gluttony, Sloth, and Lust, are manifest; the dejectedness of a slave is likewise given him, and the ignorance of one bred up in a Desart Island. His person is monstrous, as he is the product of unnatural lust; and his language is as hobgoblin as his person; in all things he is distinguished from other mortals.

John Dryden, 1679, *Troilus and Cressida,* Preface

This drama is one of the noblest efforts of that sublime and amazing imagination, peculiar to Shakspeare, which soars above the bounds of nature, without forsaking sense; or, more properly, carries nature along with him beyond her established limits.

William Warburton, 1747, *Shakspear Plays,* with Comment and Notes

The character of Caliban, in *The Tempest,* is singularly original: but the almost animal figure, which his dress must give him, turns the attention from all that is philosophical in the conception of this part.

Madame de Staël, 1800, *The Influence of Literature upon Society,* vol. I, p. 271

The Tempest is one of the most original and perfect of Shakespear's productions, and he has shown in it all the variety of his powers. It is full of grace and grandeur. The human and imaginary characters, the dramatic and the grotesque, are blended together with the greatest art, and without any appearance of it. Though he has here given "to airy nothing a local habitation and a name," yet that part which is only the fantastic creation of his mind has the same palpable texture, and coheres "semblably" with the rest. As the preternatural part has the air of reality, and almost haunts the imagination with a sense of truth, the real characters and events partake of the wildness of a dream.

William Hazlitt, 1817-69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, p. 82

Caliban has not yet been thoroughly fathomed. For all Shakspeare's great creations are, like works of nature, subject of inexhaustible study. It was this character of whom Charles I. and some of his ministers expressed such fervent admiration; and, among other circumstances, most justly they admired the new language almost with which he is endowed for the purpose of expressing his fiendish and yet carnal thoughts of hatred to his master. Caliban is evidently not meant for scorn, but for abomination mixed with fear and partial respect. He is purposely brought into contrast with the drunken Trinculo and Stephano, with an advantageous result. He is much more intellectual than either,—uses a more elevated language not disfigured by vulgarisms, and is not liable to the low passion for plunder, as they are. He is mortal, doubtless, as his "dam" (for Shakespeare will not call her mother) Sycorax. But he inherits from her such qualities of power as a witch could be supposed to bequeath. He trembles indeed before Prospero; but that is, as we are to understand, through the moral superiority of Prospero in Christian wisdom; for, when he finds himself in the presence of dissolute and unprincipled men, he rises at once into the dignity of intellectual power.

Thomas De Quincey, 1838-63(?), *Shakspeare, Works*, ed. Masson, vol. IV, p. 85, note

If I read it rightly, it is an example of how a great poet should write allegory, —not embodying metaphysical abstractions, but giving us ideals abstracted from life itself, suggesting an undermeaning everywhere, forcing it upon us nowhere, tantalizing the mind with hints that imply so much and tell so little, and yet keep the attention all eye and ear with eager, if fruitless, expectation. Here the leading characters are not merely typical, but symbolical,—that is, they do not illustrate a class of persons, they belong to universal Nature.

James Russell Lowell, 1868-90, *Shakespeare Once More, Prose Works, Riverside ed.*, vol. III, p. 59

Is there, then, nothing to be said in favour of Caliban? Is there really and truly no print of goodness in him? Kindly Nature never wholly deserts her offspring, nor does Shakespeare. We may be very sure that he, who knew so well that there is always some soul of goodness in things evil, would not have abandoned even Caliban without infusing into his nature some charm which might be observingly distilled out. Why is it that Caliban's speech is always rhythmical? There is no character in the play whose words fall at times into sweeter cadences; if the Æolian melodies of the air are sweet, the deep bass of the earth is no less rhythmically resonant. We who see Caliban only in his prime and, a victim of heredity, full grown, are apt to forget the years of his childhood and of his innocency, when Prospero fondled him, stroked him, and made much of him, Miranda taught him to speak, and with the sympathetic instinct of young girlhood interpreted his thoughts and endowed his purposes with words.

Horace Howard Furness, 1892, *New Variorum Shakespeare, The Tempest,* vol. IX, p. iv

The splendour of sunset in *The Tempest* can escape no one, and the sternest opponent of guesswork must admit the probable presence of a designed allegory in the figure of Prospero and the burying of the book, the breaking of the staff, at the close. Even if this be thought too fanciful, nowhere has Shakespeare been more prodigal of every species of his enchantment. The exquisite but contrasted grace of Miranda and Ariel, the wonderful creation of Caliban, the varied human criticism in Gonzalo and the bad brothers, the farce-comedy of Stephano and Trinculo, do not more show the illimitable fancy and creative power of the master in scene and character than the passages, not so much scattered as showered over the whole play, show his absolute supremacy in poetry. Both in the blank verse and the lyrics, in the dialogue and the set *tirades,* in long contexts and short phrases alike, he shows himself absolute, with nothing out of reach of his faculty of expression and suggestion, with every resource of verbal music and intellectual demonstration at his command.

George Saintsbury, 1898, *A Short History of English Literature,* p. 328

Cymbeline (1610-12; 1610)*

This play has many just sentiments, some natural dialogues, and some pleasing scenes, but they are obtained at the expense of much incongruity. To remark the folly of the fiction, the absurdity of the conduct, the confusion of the names, and manners of different times, and the impossibility of the

*See note on page 181.

events in any system of life, were to waste criticism upon unresisting imbecility, upon faults too evident for detection, and too gross for aggravation.

Samuel Johnson, 1768, *General Observations on Shakspeare's Plays*

Cymbeline is one of the most delightful of Shakespear's historical plays. . . . We have almost as great an affection for Imogen as she had for Posthumus; and she deserves it better. Of all Shakespear's women she is perhaps the most tender and the most artless. Her incredulity in the opening scene with Iachimo, as to her husband's infidelity, is much the same as Desdemona's backwardness to believe Othello's jealousy. Her answer to the most distressing part of the picture is only, "My lord, I fear, has forgot Britain." Her readiness to pardon Iachimo's false imputations and his designs against herself, is a good lesson to prudes; and may show that where there is a real attachment to virtue, it has no need to bolster itself up with an outrageous or affected antipathy for vice.

William Hazlitt, 1817-69, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays,* pp. 1-3

This play is perhaps the fittest in Shakspeare's whole theatre to illustrate the principle, that great dramatic genius can occasionally venture on bold improbabilities, and yet not only shrive the offence, but leave us enchanted with the offender. I think I exaggerate not, in saying that Shakspeare has nowhere breathed more pleasurable feelings over the mind, as an antidote to tragic pain, than in *Cymbeline.*

Thomas Campbell, 1838, ed. *Shakspeare's Plays,* Moxon ed., Life

The play of plays, which is *Cymbeline,* remains alone to receive the last salute of all my love. I think, as far as I can tell, I may say I have always loved this one beyond all other children of Shakespeare.

Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare,* p. 225

This play is peculiarly a play of regeneration, and shows in manifold characters the process by which the soul is to free itself of its weak, inadequate, sinful phases. We find here, even the unregenerate—Cloten and his mother, who persist in evil and perish, though they, too, have the same chance as the rest. They can not be mediated, they make the Inferno in this comedy, which, in certain respects, is Dantean. But the chief realm here is the Purgatory, which shows the erring man in the process of regeneration. Many forms he takes, from the demon Iachimo, through Posthumus, the King, Belarius; up to even the good ones, Imogen and Pisanio; all are going through the purgatorial discipline. Shakespeare's Purgatory, however, includes the guiltless and the guilty, in this being different from Dante's; the

sinless have to suffer for and through the sinful, thereby attaining to completeness and passing from mere innocence to positive goodness. But we have also a touch of the primitive Paradise in the two youths and their mountain home. Theirs is the state of first innocence, without knowledge, but they thirst for experience, and quit their paradisaical abode, having the old Adam in them still. Thus the play completes the cycle of the human, if not of the divine comedy.

Denton Jaques Snider, 1887, *The Shakepearian Drama, The Comedies,* p. 542

The Winter's Tale (1611)

He said Shakespeare wanted art and sometimes sense, for in one of his plays he brought in a number of men saying they had suffered shipwreck in Bohemia, where is no sea near by 100 miles.

William Drummond, 1619, *Notes on Ben Jonson's Conversations*

The novel has nothing in it half so low and improbable as this contrivance of the statue; and indeed wherever Shakespear has altered or invented, his *Winter's Tale* is greatly inferior to the old paltry story that furnished him with the subject of it [*Pandosto*].

Charlotte Lennox, 1753-54, *Shakespear Illustrated*

The last complete play of Shakespere's as it is, the golden glow of the sunset of his genius is over it, the sweet country air all through it; and of few, if any of his plays, is there a pleasanter picture in the memory than of *Winter's Tale*. As long as men can think, shall Perdita brighten and sweeten, Hermione ennoble, men's minds and lives. How happily, too, it brings Shakspere before us, mixing with his Stratford neighbours at their sheep-shearing and country sports, enjoying the vagabond pedlar's gammon and talk, delighting in the sweet Warwickshire maidens, and buying them "fairings," telling goblin stories to the boys, "There was a man dwelt by a churchyard,"—opening his heart afresh to all the innocent mirth, and the beauty of nature around him.

Frederick James Furnivall, 1877, ed. *The Leopold Shakspere,* Introduction to the Play

Besides the ripe comedy, characteristic of Shakespeare at his latest, which indeed harmonizes admirably with the idyl of love to which it serves as background, there is also a harsh exhibition, in Leontes, of the meanest of the passions, an insane jealousy, petty and violent as the man who nurses it. For sheer realism, for absolute insight into the most cobwebbed corners

of our nature, Shakespeare has rarely surpassed this brief study, which, in its total effect, does but throw out in brighter relief the noble qualities of the other actors beside him, the pleasant qualities of the play they make by their acting.

Arthur Symons, 1887-90, *Henry Irving Shakespeare,* vol. VII, p. 320

The Winter's Tale, with its interval for sixteen years between two acts, may be said, too, to mark the final overthrow of Time—the hallowed "Unity of Time"—by its natural adversary, the Romantic Drama. The play recalls Sir Philip Sidney's criticism, in his *Apologie for Poetrie,* anent the crude romantic plays popular about 1580, when he outlined a plot somewhat analogous to that of *The Winter's Tale* as a typical instance of the abuse of dramatic decorum by lawless playwrights, who, contrary to academic rule, neglected both "time and place." *The Winter's Tale,* perhaps the very last of Shakespeare's comedies, appropriately emphasises, as it were, the essential elements of the triumph of the New over the Old. Sidney could not foresee, in 1580, the glorious future in store for the despised Cinderella of the playhouses,

"Now grown in grace
Equal with wondering."

Israel Gollancz, 1894, ed. *Temple Shakespeare,* Preface, p. x

Henry VIII (1613)

Now let matters of state sleep, I will entertain you at the present with what happened at the Bankside. The king's players had a new play, called *All is True,* representing some principal pieces of the reign of Henry VIII., which was set forth with many extraordinary circumstances of pomp and majesty, even to the matting of the stage; the knights of the Order, with their Georges and Garter, the guards with their embroidered coats and the like; sufficient, in Truth, within a while to make greatness very familiar if not ridiculous. Now King Henry making a masque at the Cardinal Wolsey's House, and certain canons being shot off at his entrance, some of the paper, or other stuff wherewith one of them was stopped, did light on the thatch, where being thought at first but an idle smoak, and their eyes more attentive to the show, it kindled inwardly and ran round like a train, consuming within less than an hour the whole House to the very grounds.

Sir Henry Wotton, 1613, *Epistles*

The opening . . . seemed to have the full stamp of Shakspere in his latest manner; the same close-packed expression; the same life and reality and

freshness; the same rapid and abrupt turnings of thought, so quick that language can hardly follow fast enough; the same impatient activity of intellect and fancy, which, having once disclosed an idea, cannot wait to work it orderly out; the same daring confidence in the resources of language which plunges headlong into a sentence without knowing how it is to come forth; the same careless metre which disdains to produce its harmonious effects by the ordinary devices, yet is evidently subject to a master of harmony; the same entire freedom from book-language and commonplace.

James Spedding, August, 1850, "Who Wrote Shakspere's *Henry VIII?*," *Gentleman's Magazine*

In *Henry VIII.* I think I see plainly the cropping out of the original rock on which his own finer stratum was laid. The first play was written by a superior, thoughtful man, with a vicious ear. I can mark his lines, and know well their cadence. See Wolsey's soliloquy, and the following scene with Cromwell, where instead of the metre of Shakspeare, whose secret is that the thought constructs the tune, so that reading for the sense will best bring out the rhythm,—here the lines are constructed on a given tune, and the verse has even a trace of pulpit eloquence. But the play contains through all its length unmistakable traits of Shakspeare's hand, and some passages, as the account of the coronation, are like autographs. What is odd, the compliment to Queen Elizabeth is in the bad rhythm.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1850-76, *Shakspeare; or, the Poet, Representative Men*

If Katharine is a little disappointing, Anne is an unmitigated failure. . . . Turning to the character of Henry VIII. we find a showy figure, who plays his part of king not without effect. Looking deeper, we discover that there is nothing deeper to discover. The Henry of history is a puzzling character, but the Henry of a play should be adequately conceived and intelligibly presented. Whatever disguise he may choose to assume towards the men and women who walk beside him on the boards, to us he must be without disguise. As it is, we know no more than after reading Holinshed whether the Henry of the play believed or did not believe—or what partial belief he had—in those "scruples," for instance, to which he refers, not without a certain unction. He is illogical, insubstantial, the merely superficial presentment of a deeply interesting historical figure, who would, we may be sure, have had intense interest for Shakespeare, and to whom Shakespeare would have given his keenest thought, his finest workmanship.

Arthur Symons, 1887-90, *Henry Irving Shakespeare*, vol. VIII, pp. 162, 163

General

As the soul of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras: so the sweet witty soul of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare. Witness his Venus and Adonis; his Lucrece; his sugared Sonnets, among his private friends; &c. As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latins: so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage. For Comedy: witness his Gentlemen of Verona; his (Comedy of) Errors; his Love's Labour's Lost; his Love's Labour's Won (? All's Well that Ends Well) his Midsummer Night's Dream; and his Merchant of Venice. For tragedy: his Richard II., Richard III., Henry IV., King John, Titus Andronicus, and his Romeo and Juliet. As Epius Stolo said that the Muses would speak with Plautus's tongue, if they would speak Latin: so I say that the Muses would speak with Shakespeare's fine filed phrase; if they would speak English.

Francis Meres, 1598, *Palladis Tamia*

He was not of an age, but for all time!
And all the *Muses* still were in their prime,
When like *Apollo* he came forth to warme
Our eares, or like a *Mercury* to charme!
Nature her selfe was proud of his designes,
And joy'd to weare the dressing of his lines!
Which were so richly spun, and woven so fit,
As, since, she will vouchsafe no other Wit.

Ben Jonson, 1623, *Shakespeare's Works,* Preface

And though you be a Magistrate of wit, and sit on the Stage at *Black-Friers,* or the *Cock-pit,* to arraigne Playes dailie, know, these Playes have had their triall alreadie, and stood out all Appeales; and do now come forth quitted rather by a Decree of Court, then any purchas'd Letters of commendation. It had bene a thing, we confesse, worthie to have bene wished, that the Author himselfe had liv'd to have set forth, and overseen his owne writtings; But since it hath bin ordain'd otherwise, and he by death departed from that right, we pray you do not envie his Friends, the office of their care, and paine, to have collected & publish'd them; and so to have publish'd them, as where (before) you were abus'd with diverse stolne, and surreptitious copies, maimed, and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of injurious imposters, that expos'd them: even those, are now offer'd to your view cur'd, and perfect of their limbes; and all the rest, absolute in their numbers, as he conceived the. Who, as he was a happie imitator of Nature, was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand

went together: And what he thought, he uttered with that easinesse, that wee have scarse received from him a blot in his papers. But it is not our province, who onely gather his works, and give them you, to praise him. It is yours that reade him. And there we hope, to your divers capacities, you will finde enough, both to draw, and hold you: for his wit can no more lie hid, then it could be lost. Reade him, therefore; and againe, and againe: And if then you doe not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger, not to understand him. And so we leave you to other of his Friends, whom if you need, can bee your guides: if you neede them not, you can leade your selves, and others. And such Readers we wish him.

John Heminge and Henrie Condell, 1623, *First Folio Edition of Shakespeare's Works,* Address to the Reader

I *remember,* the Players have often mentioned it as an honour to *Shakespeare,* that in his writing, (whatsoever he penn'd) hee never blotted out line. My answer hath beene, would he had blotted a thousand. Which they thought a malevolent speech. I had not told posterity this, but for their ignorance, who choose that circumstance to commend their friend by, wherein he most faulted. And to justifie mine owne candor, (for I lov'd the man, and doe honour his memory (on this side Idolatry) as much as any.) Hee was (indeed) honest, and of an open, and free nature: had an excellent *Phantsie;* brave notions, and gentle expressions: wherein hee flow'd with that facility, that sometime it was necessary he should be stop'd: *Sufflaminandus erat;* as *Augustus* said of *Haterius*. His wit was in his owne power; would the rule of it had beene so too. Many times hee fell into those things, could not escape laughter: As when hee said in the person of *Cæsar,* one speaking to him; *Cæsar thou dost me wrong.* Hee replyed: *Cæsar did never wrong, but with just cause:* and such like; which were ridiculous. But hee redeemed his vices, with his vertues. There was ever more in him to be praysed, then to be pardoned.

Ben Jonson, 1630-37, *Timber, or Discoveries*

What neede my *Shakespeare for his honour's bones,*
The labour of an Age, in piled stones
Or that his hallow'd Reliques should be hid
Under a starre-ypointing Pyramid?
Dear Sonne of Memory, great Heire of *Fame,*
What needst thou such dull witnesse of thy Name?
Thou in our wonder and astonishment
Hast built they selfe a lasting Monument:
For whil'st to th' shame of slow-endevouring Art
Thy easie numbers flow, and that each part,

Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued Booke,
Those Delphicke Lines with deepe Impression tooke
Then thou our fancy of her selfe bereaving,
Dost make us Marble with too much conceiving,
And so Sepulcher'd in such pompe dost lie
That Kings for such a Tombe would wish to die.

John Milton, 1630, *An Epitaph on the admirable Dramaticke Poet, W. Shakespeare*

Shakespeare, who many times has written better than any poet, in any language, is yet so far from writing wit always, or expressing that wit according to the dignity of the subject, that he writes, in many places, below the dullest writers of ours, or any precedent age. Never did any author precipitate himself from such height of thought to so low expressions, as he often does. He is the very Janus of poets; he wears almost everywhere two faces; and you have scarce begun to admire the one, ere you despise the other. . . . Let us therefore admire the beauties and the height of Shakespeare, without falling after him into a carelessness, and, as I may call it, a lethargy of thought, for whole scenes together.

John Dryden, 1672, *An Essay on the Dramatic Poetry of the Last Age; Works,* ed. Scott and Saintsbury, vol. IV, pp. 236, 242

I confess I cou'd never yet get a true account of his Learning, and am apt to think it more than Common Report allows him. I am sure he never touches on a Roman Story, but the Persons, the Passages, the Manners, the Circumstances, the Ceremonies, all are Roman. And what Relishes yet of a more exact Knowledge, you do not only see a Roman in his Heroe, but the particular Genius of the Man, without the least mistake of his Character, given him by their best Historians. You find his Anthony in all the Defects and Excellencies of his Mind, a Souldier, a Reveller, Amorous, sometimes Rash, sometimes Considerate, with all the various Emotions of his Mind. His Brutus agen has all the Constancy, Gravity, Morality, Generosity, Imaginable, without the least Mixture of private Interest or Irregular Passion. He is true to him, even in the imitation of his Oratory, the famous Speech which he makes him deliver, being exactly agreeable to his manner of expressing himself; of which we have this account, *Facultas ejus erat Militaris & Bellicis accommodata Tumultubus.* But however it far'd with our Author for Book-Learning, 'tis evident that no man was better studied in Men and Things, the most useful Knowledge for a Dramatic Writer. He was a most diligent Spie upon Nature, trac'd her through her darkest Recesses, pictur'd her in her just Proportion and Colours; in

which Variety 'tis impossible that all shou'd be equally pleasant, 'tis sufficient that all be proper.

Nahum Tate, 1680, *The Loyal General, a Tragedy,* Address to Edward Tayler

Among the English [who have introduced fairies, witches, &c.] Shakespeare has incomparably excelled all others. That noble extravagance of fancy, which he had in so great perfection, thoroughly qualified him to touch this weak, superstitious part of his reader's imagination; and made him capable of succeeding where he had nothing to support him besides the strength of his own genius. There is something so wild, and yet so solemn, in the speeches of his ghosts, fairies, witches, and the like imaginery persons, that we cannot forbear thinking them natural, though we have no rule by which to judge of them, and must confess, if there are such beings in the world, it looks highly probable they should talk and act as he has represented them.

Joseph Addison, 1712, *Spectator,* no. 419, July 1

If ever any author deserved the name of an *original,* it was Shakespear. Homer himself drew not his art so immediately from the fountains of Nature; it proceeded through Egyptian strainers and channels, and came to him not without some tincture of the learning, or some cast of the models, of those before him. The poetry of Shakespear was inspiration indeed; he is not so much an imitator as an instrument of Nature; and it is not so just to say that he speaks from her, as that she speaks through him. His *characters* are so much Nature herself, that 'tis a sort of injury to call them by so distant a name as copies of her. Those of other poets have a constant resemblance, which shows that they received them from one another, and were but multipliers of the same image; each picture, like a mock rainbow, is but the reflection of a reflection. But every single character in Shakespear is as much an individual as those in life itself; it is as impossible to find any two alike; and such as from their relation or affinity in any respect appear most to be twins, will upon comparison be found remarkably distinct. To this life and variety of character we must add the wonderful preservation of it, which is such throughout his Plays, that, had all the speeches been printed without the very names of the persons, I believe one might have applied them with certainty to every speaker. The *power* over our *passions* was never possess'd in a more eminent degree, or displayed in so different instances. Yet all along there is seen no labour, no pains to raise them; no preparation to guide or guess to the effect, or be perceiv'd to lead towards it; but the heart swells, and the tears burst out, just at the proper places. We are surprised at the moment we weep; and

yet upon reflection find the passion so just, that we should have been surprised if we had not wept, and wept at that very moment.

Alexander Pope, 1725, ed. *Shakspear's Plays,* Preface, *Works,* ed. Elwin and Courthope, vol. X, p. 534

If Shakspere be considered as a Man, born in a rude age, and educated in the lowest manner, without any instruction, either from the world or from books, he may be regarded as a prodigy; if represented as a poet, capable of furnishing a proper entertainment to a refined or intelligent audience, we must abate much of this eulogy. In his compositions, we regret that many irregularities, and even absurdities, should so frequently disfigure the animated and passionate scenes intermixed with them; and, at the same time, we perhaps admire the more those beauties, on account of their being surrounded with such deformities. A striking peculiarity of sentiment, adapted to a single character, he frequently hits, as it were, by inspiration; but a reasonable propriety of thought he cannot for any time uphold. Nervous and picturesque expressions as well as descriptions abound in him; but it is in vain we look either for purity or simplicity of diction. His total ignorance of all theatrical art and conduct, however material a defect, yet, as it affects the spectator rather than the reader, we can more easily excuse, than that want of taste which often prevails in his productions, and which gives way only by intervals to the irradiations of genius. A great and fertile genius he certainly possessed, and one enriched equally with a tragic and comic vein; but he ought to be cited as a proof, how dangerous it is to rely on these advantages alone for attaining an excellence in the finer arts. And there may even remain a suspicion that we overrate, if possible, the greatness of his genius; in the same manner as bodies often appear more gigantic, on account of their being disproportioned and misshapen.

David Hume, 1754-62, *History of England, Reign of James I,* Appendix

This therefore is the praise of Shakspeare, that his drama is the mirror of life! that he who has mazed his imagination, in following the phantoms which other writers raise up before him, may here be cured of his delirious ecstasies, by reading human sentiments in human language, by scenes from which a hermit may estimate the transactions of the world, and a confessor predict the progress of the passions. . . . The force of his comic scenes has suffered little diminution from the changes made by a century and a half, in manners or in words. As his personages act upon principles arising from genuine passion, very little modified by particular forms, their pleasures and vexations are communicable at all times and to all places;

they are natural and therefore durable; the adventitious peculiarities of personal habits are only superficial dyes, bright and pleasing for a little while, yet soon fading to a dim tinct, without any remains of former lustre; but the discriminations of true passion are the colours of nature; they pervade the whole mass, and can only perish with the body that exhibits them. The accidental compositions of heterogeneous modes are dissolved by the chance which combined them; but the uniform simplicity of primitive qualities neither admits increase, nor suffers decay. The sand heaped by one flood is scattered by another, but the rock always continues in its place. Time, which is perpetually washing away the dissoluble fabrics of other poets, passes, without *injuring* the adamant of Shakspeare.

Samuel Johnson, 1768, ed. *Shakspeare's Works,* Preface

If intelligence and penetrating depth of observation, as far as they are necessary to the characterizing of life, were the first of poetic qualities, hardly any other poet could enter into competition with him. Others have sought to transport us, for a moment, to an ideal condition of humanity: he presents us with a picture of man, in the depths of his fall and moral disorganization, with all his doings and sufferings, his thoughts and desires, with a painful minuteness. In this respect he may almost be called a satirist; and well might the complicated enigma of existence, and of man's degradation, as set forth by him, produce a deeper and more lasting impression than is made by a host of splenetic caricaturists, who are called satiric poets. But throughout his works there is a radiant reminiscence of man's pristine dignity and elevation, from which immorality and meanness are an abnormal apostasy: and on every occasion this reminiscence, united to the poet's own nobility of soul and tender feeling, beams forth in patriotic enthusiasm, sublime philanthropy, and glowing love. . . . In the works of Shakspere a whole world is unfolded. Whosoever has comprehended this, and been penetrated with the spirit of his poetry will hardly allow the seeming want of form, or, rather, the form peculiar to his mighty genius, nor even the criticism of those who have misconceived the poet's meaning, to disturb his admiration; as he progresses he will, rather, approve the form as both sufficient and excellent in itself, and in harmonious conformity with the spirit and essence of his art. Shakspere's poetry is, upon the whole, near akin to the German spirit: hence he is appreciated in Germany more than any other foreign poet, and regarded with almost native affection.

Frederick Schlegel, 1815-59, *Lectures on the History of Literature,* pp. 274, 276

It is the peculiar excellence of Shakespear's heroines, that they seem to exist only in their attachment to others. They are pure abstractions of the affec-

tions. We think as little of their persons as they do themselves, because we are let into the secrets of their hearts, which are more important. We are too much interested in their affairs to stop to look at their faces, except by stealth and at intervals. No one ever hit the true perfection of the female character, the sense of weakness leaning on the strength of its affections for support, so well as Shakespear: no one ever so well painted natural tenderness free from affectation and disguise: no one else ever so well showed how delicacy and timidity, when driven to extremity, grow romantic and extravagant.

William Hazlitt, 1817-69, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, p. 3

If it be said that Shakspere wrote perfect historical plays on subjects belonging to the preceding centuries, I answer, that they *are* perfect plays just because there is no care about centuries in them, but a life which all men recognise for the human life of all time; and this it is, not because Shakspere sought to give universal truth, but because, painting honestly and completely from the men about him, he painted that human nature which is, indeed, constant enough,—a rogue in the fifteenth century being, *at heart,* what a rogue is in the nineteenth and was in the twelfth; and an honest or knightly man being, in like manner, very similar to other such at any other time. And the work of these great idealists is, therefore, always universal; not because it is *not portrait,* but because it is *complete* portrait down to the heart, which is the same in all ages: and the work of the mean idealists is *not* universal, not because it is portrait, but because it is *half* portrait,—of the outside, the manners and the dress, not of the heart. Thus Tintoret and Shakspere paint, both of them, simply Venetian and English nature as they saw it in their time, down to the root; and it does for *all* time; but as for any care to cast themselves into the particular ways and tones of thought, or custom, of past time in their historical work, you will find it in neither of them, nor in any other perfectly great man that I know of.

John Ruskin, 1843-60, *Modern Painters*, pt. iv, ch. vii

Although the dialect of Shakespeare does not exhibit the same relative superiority as that of Chaucer over all older and contemporaneous literature, its absolute superiority is, nevertheless, unquestionable. I have before had occasion to remark that the greatest authors very often confine themselves to a restricted vocabulary, and that the power of their diction lies, not in the multitude of words, but in skilful combination and adaptation of a few. This is strikingly verified by an examination of the stock of words employed by Shakspeare. He introduces, indeed, terms borrowed from every art and every science, from all theoretical knowledge and all

human experience; but his entire vocabulary little exceeds fifteen thousand words, and of these a large number, chiefly of Latin origin, occur but once or at most twice in his pages. The affluence of his speech arises from variety of combination, not from numerical abundance. And yet the authorized vocabulary of Shakespeare's time probably embraced twice or thrice the number of words which he found necessary for his purposes; for though there were at that time no dictionaries which exhibit a great stock of words, yet in perusing Hooker, the old translators, and the early voyagers and travellers, we find a verbal wealth, a copiousness of diction, which forms a singular contrast with the philological economy of the great dramatist. In his theory of dramatic construction, Shakespeare owes little —in his conception of character, nothing—to earlier or contemporary artists; but in his diction, everything except felicity of selection and combination. The existence of the whole copious English vocabulary was necessary, in order that his marvelous gift of selection might have room for its exercise.

George P. Marsh, 1862, *Origin and History of the English Language, etc.*, p. 569

Superb and inimitable as all is, it is mostly an objective and physiological kind of power and beauty the soul finds in Shakspere—a style supremely grand of the sort, but in my opinion stopping short of the grandest sort, at any rate for fulfilling and satisfying modern and scientific and democratic American purposes. Think, not of growths as forests primeval, or Yellowstone geysers, or Colorado ravines, but of costly marble palaces, and palace rooms, and the noblest fixings and furniture, and noble owners and occupants to correspond—think of carefully built gardens from the beautiful but sophisticated gardening art at its best, with walks and bowers and artificial lakes, and appropriate statue-groups and the finest cultivated roses and lilies and japonicas in plenty—and you have the tally of Shakspere. The low characters, mechanics, even the loyal henchmen—all in themselves nothing—serve as capital foils to the aristocracy. The comedies (exquisite as they certainly are) bringing in admirably portray'd common characters, have the unmistakable hue of plays, portraits, made for the divertisement only of the elite of the castle, and from its point of view. The comedies are altogether non-acceptable to America and Democracy. But to the deepest soul, it seems a shame to pick and choose from the riches Shakspere has left us—to criticise his infinitely royal, multiform quality—to gauge, with optic glasses, the dazzle of his sun-like beams.

Walt Whitman, 1888, *November Boughs*, p. 56

For my part, I believe that Shakespeare wrote his plays, like the conscientious playwright that he was, to fill the theatre and make money for his

fellow-actors and for himself; and I confess to absolute scepticism in reference to the belief that in these dramas Shakespeare's self can be discovered (except on the broadest lines,) or that either his outer or his inner life is to any discoverable degree reflected in his plays; it is because Shakespeare is *not* there that the characters are so perfect,—the smallest dash of the author's self would mar to that extent the truth of the character, and make of it a mask.

Horace Howard Furness, 1890, ed. *New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare, As You Like It,* Introduction, p. viii

Shakespeare could be idealistic when he dreamed, as he could be spiritual when he reflected. The spectacle of life did not pass before his eyes as a mere phantasmagoria. He seized upon its principles; he became wise. Nothing can exceed the ripeness of his seasoned judgment, or the occasional breadth, sadness, and terseness of his reflection. The author of *Hamlet* could not be without metaphysical aptitude; *Macbeth* could not have been written without a sort of sibylline inspiration, or the Sonnets without something of the Platonic mind. It is all the more remarkable, therefore, that we should have to search through all the works of Shakespeare to find half a dozen passages that have so much as a religious sound, and that even these passages, upon examination, should prove not to be the expression of any deep religious conception. If Shakespeare had been without metaphysical capacity, or without moral maturity, we could have explained his strange insensibility to religion; but as it is, we must marvel at his indifference and ask ourselves what can be the causes of it. For, even if we should not regard the absence of religion as an imperfection in his own thought, we must admit it to be an incompleteness in his portrayal of the thought of others.

George Santayana, 1900, *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion,* p. 153

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER

Plays published in their lifetime under the joint names of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, or attributed to them: The Woman Hater (anon.), 1607; *The Knight of the Burning Pestle,* 1613; *Cupid's Revenge* (published in Fletcher's name), 1615; *The Scornful Ladie,* 1616; *A King and no King,* 1619; *The Maid's Tragedy* (anon.), 1619; *Phylaster,* 1620 (performed 1611); *Tragedy of Thierry, King of France* (anon., possibly by Fletcher alone), 1621. POSTHUMOUS: *The Elder Brother* (published in Fletcher's name), 1637; *The Bloody Brother* (published under initials: B. J. F.), 1639; *Wit Without Money* (probably by Fletcher alone), 1639; *Comedies and Tragedies* (containing the following plays, some of which

were subsequently published separately: *The Mad Lover, The Spanish Curate, The Little French Lawyer, The Custome of the Countrey, The Noble Gentleman, The Captaine, The Beggar's Bush, The Coxcombe, The False One, The Chances, The Loyall Subject, The Lawes of Candy, The Lover's Progress, The Island Princesse, The Humorous Lieutenant, The Nice Valour, The Maid in the Mill, The Prophetesse, Bonduca, The Sea Voyage, The Double Marriage, The Pilgrime, The Knight of Malta, The Woman's Prize, Love's Cure, The Honest Man's Fortune, The Queene of Corinth, Women Pleas'd, A Wife for a Moneth, Wit at severall Weapons, Valentinian, The Fair Maide of the Inne, Love's Pilgrimage, The Masque of the Gentleman of Grayes Inne, etc., Four Plays or Moral Representations in One*), 1647; *The Wild-Goose Chase* (probably by Fletcher alone), 1652. COLLECTED WORKS: ed. with memoir, by Dyce (11 vols.) 1843-46.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors*, p. 21

SEE: *Works*, ed. A. Glover and A. R. Waller, 1905-12, 10 v.; E. H. C. Oliphant, *The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher: Their Respective Shares*, 1927; E. M. Waith, *The Pattern of Tragicomedy in Beaumont and Fletcher*, 1952.

PERSONAL

He [Fletcher] had an excellent wit, which, the back-friends to Stage-plays will say, was neither idle, nor well imploy'd; for he and Francis Beaumont Esquire, like Castor and Pollux (most happy when in conjunction) raised the English to equal the Athenian and Roman Theater: Beaumont bringing the ballast of judgement, Fletcher the sail of phantasie; both compounding a poet to admiration.

Thomas Fuller, 1662, *The Worthies of England*, ed. Nichols, vol. II, p. 168

Mr. Francis Beaumont was the son of Judge Beaumont. There was a wonderful consimility of phansey between him and Mr. John Fletcher, which caused that dearnesse of friendship between them. I thinke they were both of Queen's College in Cambridge. I have heard Dr. John Earles (since bishop of Sarum), who knew them, say that his maine businesse was to correct the overflowings of Mr. Fletcher's witt. They lived together on the Banke side, not far from the Play-house, both batchelors; lay together—from Sir James Hales, etc.; had one wench in the house between them, which they did so admire; the same cloathes and cloake, &c., betweene them.

John Aubrey, 1669-96, *Brief Lives*, ed. Clark, vol. I, p. 95

How happens it, the reader may ask, that this collection of plays, although not a third part ascribed to Beaumont, should be called "Beaumont and Fletcher" in stead of "Fletcher and Beaumont?" A question of mere curiosity rather than of moment fortunately demands no better answer than I

have to give—another conjecture. Beaumont, we find reason to believe, was a very precocious writer, published works, and made acquaintances among the Wits, before Fletcher did, who appears in the light of a late genius comparatively. Thus Fletcher would have joined Beaumont, as it were, not Beaumont Fletcher; and Beaumont would have been the paramount name, the one most spoken of at the "Mermaid" among choice spirits. Besides, from the very superior excellence of their earlier joint-essays, *Philaster,* &c., a presumption arises that Beaumont contributed the weightier share of them; elese, why did not Fletcher reach the same perfection in some of those many works we know to be by him alone? This also might explain wherefore Beaumont's name took precedence of Fletcher's, which it kept afterwards from habit. Or that very simple solution of numberless phenomena, which philosophers puzzle themselves stupid or otherwise to account for, may probably resolve the present enigma better than any chain of profound causes we could tie together.

George Darley, 1840, ed. *Works of Beaumont and Fletcher,* Introduction, vol. I, p. xxv

A student of physiognomy will not fail to mark the points of likeness and of difference between the faces of the two friends; both models of noble manhood, handsome and significant in feature and expression alike;—Beaumont's the statelier and serener of the two, with clear thoughtful eyes, full arched brows, and strong aquiline nose; a grave and beautiful mouth, with full and finely curved lips; the form of face a long pure oval, and the imperial head with its "fair large front" and clustering hair set firm and carried high with an aspect at once of quiet command and kingly observation: Fletcher's a more keen and fervid face, sharper in outline every way, with an air of bright ardour and glad fiery impatience; sanguine and nervous, suiting the complexion and colour of hair; the expression of the eager eyes and lips almost recalling that of a noble hound in act to break the leash it strains at;—two heads as lordly of feature and as expressive of aspect as any gallery of great men can show.

Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1894, *Studies in Prose and Poetry,* p. 59

General

Whom but to mention is to throw a cloud upon all former names, and benight posterity; this book being, without flattery, the greatest monument of the scene that time and humanity have produced, and must live, not only the crown and sole reputation of our own, but the strain of all other nations and languages. . . . Infinitely more might be said of these rare copies; but let

the ingenuous reader peruse them, and he will find them so able to speak their own worth, that they need not come into the world with a trumpet, since any one of these incomparable pieces, well understood, will prove a preface to the rest; and if the reader can taste the best wit ever trod our English stage, he will be forced himself to become a breathing panegyric to them all.

James Shirley, 1647, ed. *Works of Beaumont and Fletcher,* To the Reader

Their plots were generally more regular than Shakespeare's, especially those which were made before Beaumont's death; and they understood and imitated the conversation of gentlemen much better; whose wild debaucheries, and quickness of wit in repartees, no poet before them could paint as they have done. Humour, which Ben Jonson derived from particular persons, they made it not their business to describe: they represented all the passions very lively, but above all, love. I am apt to believe the English language in them arrived to its highest perfection; what words have since been taken in, are rather superfluous than ornamental. Their plays are now the most pleasant and frequent entertainments of the stage; two of theirs being acted through the year for one of Shakespeare's or Johnson's: the reason is, because there is a certain gaiety in their comedies, and pathos in their more serious plays, which suits generally with all men's humours. Shakespeare's language is likewise a little obsolete, and Ben Jonson's wit comes short of theirs.

John Dryden, 1668-93, *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy; Works,* ed. Scott and Saintsbury, vol. XV, p. 345

Beaumont and Fletcher were in fact men of the most distinguished talents; they scarcely wanted any thing more than a profounder seriousness of mind, and that artistic sagacity which every where observes a due measure, to rank beside the greatest dramatic poets of all nations. They possessed extraordinary fecundity and flexibility of mind, and a facility which, however, too often degenerated into carelessness. The highest perfection they have hardly ever attained; and I should have little hesitation in affirming that they had not even an idea of it: however, on several occasions they have approached quite close to it. And why was it denied them to take this last step? Because with them poetry was not an inward devotion of the feeling and imagination, but a means to obtain brilliant results. Their first object was effect, which the great artist can hardly fail of attaining if he is determined above all things to satisfy himself.

Augustus William Schlegel, 1809, *Dramatic Art and Literature*

Beaumont and Fletcher have still a high poetical value. If character be sometimes violated, probability discarded, and the interest of the plot neglected, the reader is, on the other hand, often gratified by the most beautiful description, the most tender and passionate dialogue; a display of brilliant wit and gaiety, or a feast of comic humour. These attributes had so much effect on the public, that, during the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries, many of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays had possession of the stage, while those of Shakespeare were laid upon the shelf.

Sir Walter Scott, 1814-23, *Essay on the Drama*

In Beaumont and Fletcher you have descriptions of characters by the poet rather than the characters themselves; we are told and impressively told, of their being; but we rarely or never feel that they actually are. Beaumont and Fletcher are the most lyrical of our dramatists. I think their comedies the best part of their works, although there are scenes of very deep tragic interest in some of their plays. I particularly recommend Monsieur Thomas for good pure comic humour. There is, occasionally, considerable license in their dramas; and this opens a subject much needing vindication and sound exposition, but which is beset with such difficulties for a Lecturer, that I must pass it by.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1818, *Notes on Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger*, ed. Ashe, p. 401

There are such extremes of grossness and magnificence in their drama, so much sweetness and beauty interspersed with views of nature either falsely romantic, or vulgar beyond reality; there is so much to animate and amuse us, and yet so much that we would willingly overlook, that I cannot help comparing the contrasted impressions which they make, to those which we receive from visiting some great and ancient city, picturesquely but irregularly built, glittering with spires and surrounded with gardens, but exhibiting in many quarters the lanes and hovels of wretchedness. They have scenes of wealthy and high life which remind us of courts and palaces frequented by elegant females and high-spirited gallants, whilst their noble old martial characters with Caractacus in the midst of them, may inspire us with the same sort of regard which we pay to the rough-hewn magnificence of an ancient fortress. Unhappily, the same simile, without being hunted down, will apply but too faithfully to the *nuisances* of their drama. Their language is often basely profligate. Shakspeare's and Jonson's indelicacies are but casual blots; whilst theirs are sometimes essential colours of their painting, and extend, in one or two instances, to entire and offensive scenes. This fault has deservedly injured their reputation; and, saving a very slight

allowance for the fashion and taste of their age, admits of no sort of apology.

Thomas Campbell, 1819, *An Essay on English Poetry*

Of all our early dramatic poets, none have suffered such mangling by the printer as Beaumont and Fletcher. Their style is generally elliptical, and not very perspicuous; they use words in peculiar senses; and there seems often an attempt at pointed expression, in which its meaning has deserted them. But, after every effort to comprehend their language, it is continually so remote from all possibility of bearing a rational sense, that we can only have recourse to one hypothesis,—that of an extensive and irreparable corruption of the text. . . . The comic talents of these authors far exceeded their skill in tragedy. In comedy they founded a new school, at least in England, the vestiges of which are still to be traced in our theatre. Their plays are at once distinguishable from those of their contemporaries by the regard to dramatic effect which influenced the writer's imagination. Though not personally connected with the stage, they had its picture ever before their eyes. Hence their incidents are numerous and striking; their characters sometimes slightly sketched, not drawn, like those of Jonson, from a preconceived design, but preserving that degree of individual distinctness which a common audience requires, and often highly humorous without extravagance; their language brilliant with wit; their measure, though they do not make great use of prose, very lax and rapid, running frequently to lines of thirteen and fourteen syllables. Few of their comedies are without a mixture of grave sentiments or elevated characters; and, though there is much to condemn in their indecency and even licentiousness of principle, they never descend to the coarse buffoonery not infrequent in their age.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, pt. iii, ch. vi, pars. 62, 86

I am not aware that any of Fletcher's unassisted plays are in some respect more devoid of "judgment" than certain of those which Beaumont is held to have taken part; while on the other hand I doubt whether any of the joint plays surpass in cleverness of construction some in which Fletcher worked alone. Cavils of this kind might be multiplied; but I am at a loss to see in what respect it would prove possible to show that the co-operation of Beaumont either enhanced or impeded the creative powers of Fletcher. Doubtless their joint productions are not disfigured by such offences against a high standard of dramatic morality as those which disfigure certain plays written independently by Fletcher only; but he would be a rash judge who, with some of the joint plays before him, should conclude Beaumont to have acted in this respect as a "check" upon his friend. For all we know to the contrary, Beaumont and Fletcher were alike dramatic poets of so high an ability

as to be able to work on terms of equality, and to conceive in thorough harmony with one another what in certain respects of form they may have to a great degree executed independently; while it is evident that neither of them was possessed of creative powers with which capabilities of an inferior order could under no circumstances be fused in authorship.

Adolphus William Ward, 1875-99, *A History of English Dramatic Literature,* vol. II, p. 660

Few things are stranger than the avowal of so great and exquisite a critic as Coleridge that he could trace no faintest line of demarcation between the plays which we owe mainly to Beaumont and the plays which we owe solely to Fletcher. To others this line has always appeared in almost every case unmistakable. . . . The genius of Beaumont was deeper, sweeter, nobler than his elder's: the genius of Fletcher more brilliant, more supple, more prodigal and more voluble than his friend's. Without a taint or a shadow on his fame of such imitative servility as marks and degrades the mere henchman or satellite of a stronger poet, Beaumont may fairly be said to hold of Shakespeare in his tragedy, in his comedy of Jonson; in each case rather as a kinsman than as a client, as an ally than as a follower: but the more special province of Fletcher was a land of his own discovering, where no later colonist has ever had power to settle or to share his reign.

Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1894, *Studies in Prose and Poetry,* pp. 61, 70

FRANCIS BEAUMONT
1584-1616

Francis Beaumont, 1584-1616. Born, at Grace-Dieu, Leicestershire, 1584. Matriculated at Broadgates Hall (now Pembroke College, Oxford), 1597. Left University without degree, April 1598, on death of father. Admitted to Inner Temple, 3 Nov. 1600. First verses published, 1602. Early intimacy with John Fletcher. Wrote dramas with him, 1605-14. Lived in London, with occasional visits to Grace-Dieu. Married Ursula Isley, 1613(?). Had two daughters. Died, 6 March 1616. Buried in Westminster Abbey. WORKS: For plays written with John Fletcher, [*see* Beaumont and Fletcher]. Verse prefixed to Sir John Beaumont's *Metamorphosis of Tobacco,* 1602; *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* (anon.; authorship not certain), 1602; *The Masque of the Gentlemen of Grayes Inne and the Inner Temple* (anon.), 1613; contrib. to *Certain Elegies, done by sundrie excellent Wits,* 1618. POSTHUMOUS: *Poems,* 1640.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 20

SEE: bibliographical listing under Beaumont and Fletcher, page 270.

General

How I do love thee, Beaumont and thy Muse,
That unto me dost such religion use!
How I do fear myself, that am not worth
The least indulgent thought thy pen drops forth!
At once thou mak'st me happy and unmak'st;
And giving largely to me more thou tak'st!
What fate is mine, that so itself bereaves?
What art is thine, that so thy friend deceives?
When even there, where most thou praisest me,
For writing better, I must envy thee.

Ben Jonson, 1616, *To Francis Beaumont, Epigrams*

The tradition runs that his chief business was to correct the overflowings of Fletcher's fancy, and hold its volatile creativeness in check. Everybody of that age commended his judgment, and even Ben Jonson is said to have consulted him in regard to his plots. The plays in which he had a main hand exhibit a firmer hold upon character, a more orderly disposition of the incidents, and greater symmetry in the construction, than the others. His verse is also simpler, sweeter, more voluble, than Fletcher's, with few of the latter's double and triple endings and harsh pauses. . . . After, however, awarding to Beaumont all that he can properly claim, he must still be placed below Fletcher, not merely in fertility, but in force and variety of genius.

Edwin P. Whipple, 1859-68, *The Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*, pp. 161, 165

Beaumont's successive "elegies" and minor poems, written at various times, are in aggregate inexplicably poor and unequal. Even with the "sole daughter" of a Sidney to inspire him, his "mourning" verse is mechanical. It is alone as a dramatic poet that he lives.

A. B. Grosart, 1885, *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. IV, p. 55

There was no lack of difference, especially of a metrical nature, about their styles. As far as we can judge, Beaumont's was the gift for tragedy; he had less wit and less skill than Fletcher, but he was more genuinely inspired, richer in feeling, and more daring in invention than his brother poet. His noble head is encircled by a halo of sadness, for, like Marlowe and Shelley, two of England's greatest poets, he died before he had completed his thirtieth year.

Georg Brandes, 1898, *William Shakespeare, A Critical Study*, vol. II, p. 298

SIR WALTER RALEIGH
1552-1618

Walter Raleigh, born at Hayes, near Budleigh, in Devonshire, in 1552, entered Oriel College, Oxford, in 1568, went as a volunteer to France in 1569, and served in the continental wars for several years. Received with favour at Court, he was knighted, and took part in expeditions for planting colonies in North America. Raleigh distinguished himself in various engagements with the Spanish Armada in 1588. In 1595 he sailed in search of the fabulous El Dorado, and having made some conquests in South America, on his return in 1595 published an account of his voyage, under the title *The Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana.* He distinguished himself at the capture of Cadiz in 1596, and took Fayal in 1597; but on the death of Elizabeth he fell out of favour, and was tried for high treason at Winchester, and found guilty in September, 1603. Though reprieved, he remained a prisoner in the Tower thirteen years, during which time he wrote the fragment of *The History of the World,* published in 1614. Having obtained his release, he sailed for Guiana in 1617, and on his return to England in July, 1618, was arrested at the instigation of the Spaniards, whose possessions in the new world he had assailed. On the 28th of October, 1618, the sentence was passed upon him, and he was beheaded, Oct. 29.

George H. Townsend, 1870, *The Every-Day Book of Modern Literature,* vol. I, p. 183

SEE: *Selections from His Histories of the World, His Letters. . . .* , ed. G. E. Hadow, 1917; *Poems,* ed. A. M. C. Latham, 1929, repr. 1962; M. C. Bradbrook, *The School of Night: A Study of the Literary Relationships of Ralegh,* 1936; Ernest A. Strathmann, *Sir Walter Ralegh, A Study in Elizabethan Scepticism,* 1951; Walter Oakeshott, *The Queen and the Poet,* 1960; Norman Lloyd, *Sir Walter Raleigh,* 1962.

PERSONAL

Sir Walter Ralegh did (in my judgment) no man better; and his artillery [had] most effect. I never knew the gentleman till this time; and I am sorry for it, for there are in him excellent things, besides his valour. And the observation he hath in this voyage used with my Lord of Essex hath made me love him.

Sir Anthony Standen, 1596, *Letter to Lord Burghley,* Cadiz, July 5th, MS. Harl., 6845, fol. 101, verso. (British Museum)

Cecil dothe beare no love to Raleighe, as you well understande, in the matter of Essex. I wyste not that he hathe evyll desygn, in pointe of faithe or relygion. As he hath often discoursede to me wyth moch lernynge, wysdom, and freedome, I knowe he dothe somewhat dyffer in opynyon from

some others; but I thynke alsoe his hearte is welle fixed in everye honeste thynge, as farre as I can looke into hym. He seemethe wondrouslie fitted, bothe by arte and nature, to serve the state, especiallie as he is versede in foraign matters, his skyll theryn being alwaies estimable and prayse-worthie. In relygion, he hathe showne (in pryvate talke) great depthe and goode readynge, as I once experiencede at hys owne howse, before manie lernede men.

Sir John Harrington, 1603, *Letter to John Still; Nugæ Antiqæ*, vol. I

I will prove you the notoriest Traitor that ever came to the bar. . . . Thou art a monster; thou hast an English face, but a Spanish heart. . . . We have to deal to-day with a man of wit. . . Thou hast a Spanish heart, and thyself art a Spider of Hell.

Sir Edward Coke, 1603, *Trial of Sir Walter Raleigh, Cobbett's Collection of State Trials*, vol. II, no. 74

For myself, I am left of all men that have done good to many. All my good turns forgotten; all my errors revived and expounded to all extremity of ill. All my services, hazards, and expenses for my country—plantings, discoveries, fights, councils, and whatsoever else—malice hath now covered over. I am now made an enemy and traitor by the word of an unworthy man. He hath proclaimed me to be a partaker of his vain imaginations, notwithstanding the whole course of my life hath approved the contrary, as my death shall approve it. Woe, woe, woe be unto him by whose falsehood we are lost. He hath separated us asunder. He hath slain my honor; my fortune. He hath robbed thee of thy husband, thy child of his father, and me of you both. O God! thou dost know my wrongs. Know, then, thou my wife, and child;—know, then, thou my Lord and King, that I ever thought them too honest to betray, and too good to conspire against.

Sir Walter Raleigh, 1603, *Letter to Lady Raleigh*, Edwards' *Life of Raleigh*, vol. II, p. 384

I was commaunded by the Lords of the Counsayle to be with him, both in prison and att his death, and so sett downe the manner of his death as nere as I could. . . . He was the most fearlesse of death that ever was knowen; and the most resolute and confident, yet with reverence and conscience. When I begann to incourage him against the feare of death, he seemed to make so light of itt, that I wondered att him, and when I told him, that the deare servants of God, in better causes than his, had shrunke backe and trembled a litle, he denyed not, but yet gave God thankes, he never feared

death, and much less then, for it was but an opinion and imagination; and the manner of death though to others might seeme greevous, yet he had rather dye so then of a burning fever. . .. He was very cheerefull that morning he dyed, eate his breakefast hertily, and tooke tobacco, and made no more of his death, then if he had bene to take a journey, and left a great impression in the minds of those that beheld him, inasmuch that Sir Lewis Stukely and the French man grow very odious. This was the newes a weeke since: but now it is blowen over, and he allmost forgotten.

Rev. Robert Tounson, 1618, *Letter to Sir John Isham*, Nov. 9, *Hearne's Hemingforde*, App., vol. I

Sir Walter Ralegh had the favour to be beheaded at Westminster, where he died with great applause of the beholders, most constantly, most Christianly, most religiously.

John Pym, 1618, *Memorable Accidents*

He was a tall, handsome, and bold man: but his naeve was that he was damnable proud. Old Sir Robert Harley of Brampton-Brian Castle, who knew him, would say 'twas a great question who was the proudest, Sir Walter, or Sir Thomas Overbury, but the difference that was, was judged on Sir Thomas' side. . . . His beard turnd up naturally.—I have heard my grandmother say that when she was young, they were wont to talke of this rebus, viz.,

The enemie to the stomack, and the word of disgrace,
Is the name of the gentleman with a bold face.

. . . Old Sir Thomas Malett, one of the justices of the King's Bench tempore Caroli I et II, knew Sir Walter; and I have heard him say that, notwithstanding his so great mastership in style and his conversation with the learnedst and politest persons, yet he spake broad Devonshire to his dyeing day. His voice was small, as likewise were my schoolfellowes', his grandnephewes. . . . Sir Walter Ralegh was a great chymist; and amongst some MSS. receipts, I have seen some secrets from him. He studyed most in his sea-voyages, where he carried always a trunke of bookes along with him, and had nothing to divert him. . . . Memorandum:—he made an excellent cordiall, good in feavers, etc.; Mr. Robert Boyle haz the recipe, and makes it and does great cures by it. . . . A person so much immerst in action all along and in fabrication of his owne fortunes, (till his confinement in the Tower) could have but little time to study, but what he could spare in the morning. He was no slug; without doubt, had a wonderfull waking spirit, and great judgment to guide it.

John Aubrey, 1669-96, *Brief Lives*, ed. Clark, vol. II, p. 182

He was accused by Cobham alone, in a sudden fit of passion, upon hearing that Raleigh, when examined, had pointed out some circumstances, by which Cobham's guilt might be known and ascertained. This accusation Cobham afterwards retracted; and soon after he retracted his retraction. Yet upon the written evidence of this single witness, a man of no honour or understanding, and so contradictory in his testimony, not confronted with Raleigh, not supported by any concurring circumstance, was that great man, contrary to all law and equity, found guilty by the jury. His name was at that time extremely odious in England; and every man was pleased to give sentence against the capital enemy of Essex, the favourite of the people.

David Hume, 1754-62, *The History of England,* vol. IV, ch. xlv

Raleigh, the soldier, the sailor, the scholar, the courtier, the orator, the poet, the historian, the philosopher, sometimes reviewing the queen's guards, sometimes giving chase to a Spanish galleon, then answering the chiefs of the country party in the House of Commons, then again murmuring one of his sweet love-songs too near the ears of her highness's maids of honour, and soon after poring over the Talmud, or collating Polybius with Livy.

Thomas Babington Macaulay, 1832, "Nares's *Memoirs of Burghley,*" *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*

Poems

And there that shepheard of the Ocean is,
That spends his wit in loves consuming smart:
Full sweetly tempered is that Muse of his,
That can empierce a Princes mightie hart.

Edmund Spenser, 1595, *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe, Spenser's Works,* ed. Collier, vol. V, p. 47

Do I pronounce Raleigh a poet? Not, perhaps, in the judgment of a severe criticism. Raleigh, in his better days, was too much occupied in action to have cultivated all the powers of a poet, which require solitude and perpetual meditation, and a refinement of sensibility, such as intercourse with business and the world deadens! . . . The production of an *Heroic Poem* would have nobly employed this illustrious Hero's mighty faculties, during the lamentable years of his unjust incarceration. But how could he delight to dwell on the tale of Heroes, to whom the result of Heroism had been oppression, imprisonment, ruin, and condemnation to death? We have no proof that Raleigh possessed the copious, vivid, and creative powers of

Spenser; nor is it probable that any cultivation would have brought forth from him fruit equally rich. But even in the careless fragments now presented to the reader, I think we can perceive some traits of attraction and excellence which, perhaps, even Spenser wanted. If less diversified than the gifted bard, he would, I think, have sometimes been more forcible and sublime; his images would have been more gigantic, and his reflections more daring. With all his mental attention keenly bent on the best state of existing things in political society, the range of his thoughts had been lowered down to political wisdom; but other habits of intellectual exercise, excursions into the ethereal fields of fiction, and converse with the spirits which inhabit those upper regions, would have given a grasp and a colour to his conceptions as magnificent as the fortitude of his soul.

Samuel Egerton Brydges, 1813, ed. *The Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh,* pp. 43, 46

Spenser's friend Raleigh left us so excellent a sonnet on *The Faerie Queene,* that it makes us wish he had written a thousand; or rather, that he had devoted his whole life to poetry, instead of the pursuits that ruined him. . . . His pen was very like a sword. You see, in this one little sonnet, what possession he takes of the whole poetical world, in favor of the sovereignity of his friend Spenser. He was not exactly in the right; but when did conquerors consider the right? The sonnet is of the least artistical order, as to construction, consisting only of the three elegiac quatrains and a couplet; and it has the fault of monotonous assonance in the rhymes; yet it flows with such nerve and will, and is so dashing and sounding in the rest of its modulation, that no impression remains upon the mind but that of triumphant force.

Leigh Hunt, 1859(?)-67, *An Essay on the Sonnet,* ed. Lee, vol. I, p. 75

The biographers and editors of Raleigh have been sorely puzzled by finding that a poem, usually called "The Silent Lover," and assigned to Raleigh, was attributed in one of the Ashmolean MSS. (No. 781, p. 143) to *Lo. Walden.* In the index to the MSS. they are called *"Lo Walden's verses;"* and Ritson, on the authority of this name only, inserts Lord Walden (afterwards Earl of Suffolk) in his "Bibliotheca Poetica," p. 383. Park goes even farther; for, upon the strength of the Ashm. MS. and Ritson, he actually converts Lord Walden into one of his "Royal and Noble Authors," and writes his life accordingly. What is the fact? The reader will hardly require it to be pointed out. "The Silent Lover" is unquestionably by Raleigh; but at the time it was written, or got abroad, its author was Lord Warden, *i.e.* Lord Warden of the Stannaries; and because Lord Warden was miswritten Lo. Walden, an at-

tempt has been made to deprive the real owner of his undoubted property. Our neighbours of Edinburgh have not scrupled, not merely to rob Raleigh of a lovely addition to his few poetical remains, but to attribute the poem to their countryman Sir Robert Aytoun, in an edition of his works published in 1844. For "Lord Walden" we have only to read Lord *Warden* and the difficulty is at an end—a curious instance of the important consequence of a very slight corruption.

John Payne Collier, 1862, *Works of Spenser, Life,* vol. I, p. lxii, note

Stately and vigorous is his language, bearing the impress of an unbending will, a will that did not quail when the block even was in view. Many poems which were once associated with his name have been discovered not to be his workmanship, but those which remain, and which have been unquestionably authenticated, bear witness to the variety of his gifts. He was certainly a writer of *vers de société,* but being naturally a man of a grave and strong spirit, rather than a laughing and volatile one, his verse is now and again heavy and sententious.

George Barnett Smith, 1875, "English Fugitive Poets," *Poets and Novelists,* pp. 379, 380

His fancy could inspire in his "Pilgrimage" one of the loftiest appeals in all literature to Heaven from the pedantry of human justice or injustice. . . . The Court spoilt him for a national poet, as it spoilt Cowley; as it might, if it had been more generous, have spoilt Dryden. He desired to be read between the lines by a class which loved to think its own separate thoughts, and express its own separate feelings in its own diction, sometimes in its own jargon. He hunted for epigrams, and too often sparkled rather than burned. He was afraid not to be witty, to wrangle, as he himself has said,

In tickle points of niceness.

Often he refined instead of soaring. In place of sympathising he was ever striving to concentrate men's regards on himself.

William Stebbing, 1891, *Sir Walter Ralegh,* p. 78

General

Upon maritimal concerns he published no fewer than eight treatises, being, as he proudly announced, the first writer either ancient or modern that had treated on this subject. These works are written with great perspicuity, and, although the practices recommended in them be now obsolete, and the improvements and plans suggested, superseded by the rapid strides of modern science, they are interesting, as all compositions dictated by good sense and

experience must ever be; and curious, as illustrating the comparative progress of navigation, and of the arts connected with it.

Katherine Thomson, 1830, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Ralegh*, p. 259

Looking at the activity of his life, his wars, his voyages, his parliamentary duties, one is astonished at the amount of work which he did. But this work was not all. Some of the ablest state papers of the time were drawn up by him. In history, politics, philosophy, science, and poetry, his mind was also employed; and his pen productive of memorable works. His writings are voluminous. He wrote, besides his great history, on the Prerogatives of Parliament; on Trade; on Shipping; on the State of Spain; on the Life and Death of Mahomet; on the Life and Death of William the Conqueror; on Mines and Trials of Minerals; on almost every subject interesting to man.

John Alfred Langford, 1861, *Prison Books and Their Authors*, p. 91

A writer of magnificent prose, itself full of religion and poetry both in thought and expression. . . . It would be very unfair to judge Sir Walter by his verse. His prose is infinitely better, and equally displays the devout tendency of his mind—a tendency common to all the great men of that age. The worst I know of him is the selfishly prudent advice he left behind for his son. No doubt he had his faults, we must not judge a man even by what he says in an over-anxiety for the prosperity of his child.

George Macdonald, 1868, *England's Antiphon*, pp. 71, 76

When the vigour of debate passed from Parliament to the Press, no deceased writer rendered truer service to Britain than did Ralegh in supporting and lighting up the policy which is truly liberal, just because it builds upon old foundations, appeals to old instincts, and brings out what is true and vital in the national traditions. A passionate and untiring energy is not more characteristic of Ralegh the man, than a clinging to political development, rather than political construction, is the distinctive mark of Ralegh the publicist. Hence it is, as I believe, that his name figures so saliently and so continually in the political literature of the eighteenth century. In the seventeenth, his deeds and his endeavours were continually rising before the minds of men who were still fighting under the same banner and against the same enemies. Not a few of them had been the contemporaries of his closing years. In the eighteenth, all the outward circumstances of the political conflict had changed. New men are seen in the arena. The party combinations are new. The impulses and the aims of the strife are new. Yet Ralegh's writings are even more frequently appealed to. A large volume might be made of the quotations which were pressed into service during the bitter

contests of the Georgian reigns, and of the commentaries which grew out of the quotations.

Edward Edwards, 1868, *The Life of Sir Walter Ralegh,* vol. I, p. 718

This [*A Discourse on War*] may be recommended to the modern reader as the most generally pleasing of Raleigh's prose compositions, and the one in which, owing to its modest limits, the peculiarities of his style may be most conveniently studied. The last passage of the little book forms one of the most charming pages of the literature of that time, and closes with a pathetic and dignified statement of Raleigh's own attitude towards war.

Edmund Gosse, 1886, *Raleigh, (English Worthies),* p. 185

This [*Discovery of Guiana*] was a work of high importance in the development of English prose, the most brilliant and original contribution to the literature of travel which had been made during the reign of Elizabeth, rich as that had been in work of the same class. Hume, who spurned the *Discovery* from him as "full of the grossest and most palpable lies," showed an eighteenth-century blindness to the truth which lay under the magnificent diction of Raleigh's narrative, but it is strange that the conduct of that narrative itself could win no word of praise from such a critic.

Edmund Gosse, 1893, *English Prose,* ed. Craik, vol. I, p. 528

His mental calibre cannot be fairly judged, nor his versatility fully realized, until his achievements in poetry, in history, and political philosophy have been taken into account. However impetuous and rash was he in action, he surveyed life in his writings with wisdom and insight, and recorded his observations with dignity and judicial calmness. It is difficult to reconcile the religious tone of his writings with the reputation for infidelity which attached to Ralegh until his death, and was admitted to be justifiable by Hume. The charges brought against Ralegh and Marlowe in 1593 were repeated in general terms within four months after his execution by Archbishop Abbot, who attributed the catastrophe to his "questioning of "God's being and omnipotence." (Abbot to Sir Thomas Roe, 19 Feb..1618-19). Such a charge seems confuted on almost every page of his *History of the World,* in which he follows in his early chapters the Old Testament narrative with most confiding literalness, and earnestly insists throughout on God's beneficence. A similar sentiment finds repeated expression in his political essays. . . . Nothing actually inconsistent with these views can be detected in two works in which he dealt with metaphysical speculation.

J. K. Laughton and Sidney Lee, 1896, *Dictionary of National Biography,* vol. XLVII, pp. 200, 201

SAMUEL DANIEL
1562-1619

Born, near Taunton(?), 1562. At Magdalen Hall, Oxford, 1579-82(?). Possibly with Lord Stafford on an embassy to France, 1586. Visit to Italy, about 1588 or 1589. Tutor to William Herbert, son of Earl of Pembroke; lived at Wilton, Salisbury. Some sonnets of his first printed in 1591 edn. of Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella.* This being done without his knowledge, he published fifty sonnets, under title *Delia,* in 1592. Tutor to Anne Clifford, daughter of Countess of Cumberland, about 1598(?), at Skipton, Yorkshire. Possibly succeeded Spenser as poet laureate, 1599. Considerable literary activity and reputation. Masques by Daniel performed before royalty at Hampton Court, 1604; at Oxford, 1605; at Whitehall, 1610; in London, 1614. Controller of the Children of the Revels to the Queen, 1604-18. Groom of the Queen's Privy Chamber, 1607-19. Removed from London to a farm near Beckington, Wilts, about 1603(?). Died there, Oct. 1619. Probably married. WORKS: *Delia,* 1592 (2nd edition same year); *Cleopatra,* 1594; *First Fowre Bookes of the Civile Wars,* 1595; 5th, 1595; 6th, 1601; 7th and 8th, 1609; *Musophilus,* 1599; *A Letter from Octavia,* 1599; *Poeticall Essayes,* 1599; *Works . . . augmented,* 1601 (with new title-page, 1602); *The Defence of Rhyme,* 1602; *A Panegyricke Congratulatorie,* 1603; *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses,* 1604; *The Queenes Arcadia* (anon.), 1605; *Philotas,* 1605; *Ulisses and the Syren,* 1605; *Certaine Small Poems,* 1605; *Certaine Small Workes,* 1607; *Tethys Festival,* 1610 (also issued with *The Order and Solemnitie of the Creation,* 1610); *The Collection of the Historie of England,* pt. i, 1612; pt. ii, 1617; *Hymen's Triumph,* 1615. He *translated:* P. Giovio's *Imprese,* 1585; and contrib. verses to the 1611 and 1613 editions of Florio's *Montaigne.* COLLECTED WORKS: ed. by his brother, John Daniel, 1623.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 72

SEE: *Complete Works,* ed. A. B. Grosart, 1885; *Poems and A Defense of Rhyme,* ed. A. C. Sprague, 1930; *The Civil Wars,* ed. Laurence Michel, 1958; G. K. Brady, *Samuel Daniel,* 1923; Hallett Smith, in *Elizabethan Poetry,* 1952.

PERSONAL

He has touches of tenderness as well as fancy; for *he* was in earnest, and the object of his attachment was real, though disguised under the name of Delia. She resided on the banks of the river Avon, and was unmoved by the poet's strains. Rank with her outweighed love and genius.

Anna Brownell Jameson, 1829, *The Loves of the Poets,* vol. I, p. 265

Though he rejected it and called out upon it, "gentle" remains Lamb's constant epithet. And, curiously enough, in the gentleness and dignified melan-

choly of his life, Daniel stands nearer to Lamb than any other English writer, with the possible exception of Scott. His circumstances were less gloomily picturesque. But I defy any feeling man to read the scanty narrative of Daniel's life and think of him thereafter without sympathy and respect. . . . Now there is but one answer to this—that a man of really strong spirit does not suffer himself to be "put out of that sense which nature had made my part." Daniel's words indicate the weakness that in the end made futile all his powers; they indicate a certain "donnish" timidity (if I may use the epithet), a certain distrust of his own genius. Such a timidity and such a distrust often accompany very exquisite faculties: indeed, they may be said to imply a certain exquisiteness of feeling. But they explain why, of the two contemporaries, the robust Ben Jonson is to-day a living figure in most men's conception of those times, while Samuel Daniel is rather a fleeting ghost. And his self-distrust was even then recognised as well as his exquisiteness. He is indeed "well-languaged Daniel," "sweet honey-dropping Daniel," "Rosamund's trumpeter, sweet as the nightingale," revered and admired by all his compeers.

A. T. Quiller-Couch, 1895, *Adventures in Criticism,* pp. 51, 54

Delia (1592)

The publication of Daniel's sonnets in 1592 is an epoch in the history of the English Sonnet. This was the first body of sonnets written in what is sometimes called by pre-eminence the English form—three independent quatrains closed in a couplet. Daniel also set an example to Shakespeare in treating the sonnet as a stanza, connecting several of them together as consecutive parts of a larger expression. Apart from their form, there is not very much interest in the sonnets to Delia. They have all Daniel's smoothness and felicity of phrase, and are pervaded by exceedingly sweet and soft sentiment. Though they rouse no strong feelings, they may be dwelt upon by a sympathetic reader with lively enjoyment. One of them, with somewhat greater depth of feeling than most of the others, the sonnet beginning—"Care-charmer Sleep, son of the sable Night," is ranked among the best sonnets in the language. But their most general interest is found in their relation to Shakespeare's sonnets, several of which seem to have been built up from ideas suggested by the study of those to Delia.

William Minto, 1874-85, *Characteristics of English Poets,* p. 192

It is when we open Daniel's *Delia* that we recognise close kinship. The manner is the same, though the master proves himself of tardier imagination and less ardent temper. Diction, imagery, rhymes, and, in sonnets of like form, versification distinctly resemble those of Shakspere. Malone was

surely right when he recognised in Daniel the master of Shakespeare as a writer of sonnets—a master quickly excelled by his pupil. And it is in Daniel that we find sonnet starting from sonnet almost in Shakspere's manner, only that Daniel often links poem with poem in more formal wise, the last or the penultimate line of one poem supplying the first line of that which immediately follows.

Edward Dowden, 1881, ed. *The Sonnets of William Shakspere,* Introduction, p. xlix

He was an estimable man, and was a good poet, according to the standard of his day, which was more tolerant of tediousness than ours. That he was a lover is not evident from his sonnets, which are not without a certain tenderness and elegance, and which may be read as exercises of fancy with considerable pleasure. . . . The highest compliment that can be paid them is to say that two or three of them might have been written by Shakspere, who seems to have had them in mind while writing his own sonnets.

Richard Henry Stoddard, 1881, "The Sonnet in English Poetry," *Scribner's Monthly,* vol. 22, p. 910

I do not suppose it is likely now that we shall ever know who *Delia* was. But I for one recognize in these Sonnets a human passion, and not mere "sportive wit" or "idle play." The grief grows o'times monotonous and even grotesque, but ever and anon there comes the genuine "cry" of a man's heart in suspensive anguish. He is by no means a strong man—contrariwise reveals a good deal of valetudinarian sentimentalism; yet is there reality of "love," and not simply rhyme-craft.

Alexander B. Grosart, 1885, ed. *The Complete Works of Samuel Daniel,* Memorial-Introduction, vol. I, p. xvii

As a sonneteer Daniel deserves the highest praise. His sonnets are formed by three elegiac verses of alternate rhyme concluding with a couplet. For sweetness of rhythm, delicate imagery, and purity of language they nearly surpass Shakespeare's efforts. Daniel's corrections are usually for the better, and show him to have been an exceptionally slow and conscientious writer.

Sidney Lee, 1888, *Dictionary of National Biography,* vol. XIV, p. 34

The Civile Wars (1595-1609)

Daniel wrott *Civill Warres,* and yett hath not one batle in all his book.

William Drummond, 1619, *Notes on Ben Jonson's Conversations,* ed. Laing

Gravely sober on all ordinary affairs, & not easily excited by any—yet there is one, on which his Blood boils—whenever he speaks of English valour exerted against a foreign Enemy. Do read over—but some evening when we are quite comfortable, at your fireside. . . . He must not be read piecemeal. Even by leaving off & looking at a stanza by itself, I find the loss.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1808, *Letter to Charles Lamb, The Lambs,* ed. Hazlitt, p. 222

Faithfully adhering to truth, which he does not suffer so much as an ornamental episode to interrupt, and equally studious to avoid the bolder figures of poetry, it is not surprising that Daniel should be little read. It is, indeed, certain that much Italian and Spanish poetry, even by those whose name has once stood rather high, depends chiefly upon merits which he abundantly possesses,—a smoothness of rhythm, and a lucid narration in simple language. But that which from the natural delight in sweet sound is enough to content the ear in the Southern tongues, will always seem bald and tame in our less harmonious verse. It is the chief praise of Daniel, and must have contributed to what popularity he enjoyed in his own age, that his English is eminently pure, free from affectation of archaism and from pedantic innovation, with very little that is now obsolete. Both in prose and in poetry, he is, as to language, among the best writers of his time, and wanted but a greater confidence in his own power, or, to speak less indulgently, a greater share of it, to sustain his correct taste, calm sense, and moral feeling.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe,* pt. iii, ch. v, par. 43

A Defence of Rhyme (1602-7)

His *Defence of Rhyme,* written in prose (a more difficult test than verse), has a passionate eloquence that reminds one of Burke, and is more light-armed and modern than the prose of Milton fifty years later.

James Russell Lowell, 1875-90, *Spenser, Prose Works,* Riverside ed., vol. IV, p. 282

It must be confessed that a careful reading of Daniel's *Defence of Rhyme* will leave a better impression of the real weight of that able and thoughtful author than too continued a perusal of much of his "chaste and correct" poetry.

Felix E. Schelling, 1891, *Poetic and Verse Criticism of the Reign of Elizabeth,* p. 91

THOMAS LODGE
1558?-1625

Born, in London, 1558(?). At Merchant Taylors' School, March, 1570 to 1573(?). To Trinity College, Oxford, as Servitor, 1573(?); B.A., 8 July 1577; M.A., 3 Feb. 1581. Student of Lincoln's Inn, 26 April 1578. Devoted himself to literature. Married (i.) Joan ——, 1583. Tragedy, *The Wounds of Civill War,* produced, 1587(?); *A Looking Glasse for London and England* (written with Greene), produced 8 March 1592. Possibly wrote other plays with Greene. Visited Canaries, 1588-89(?); South America, 1591-93. Moved from London to Low Leyton, Essex, 1596; began to study medicine. M.D., Avignon, 1600. M.D., Oxford, 25 Oct. 1602. Licentiate, College of Physicians, 1610. Practised in London. Travelled frequently on Continent. Married (ii.) Jane Aldred. Died, in London, Sept.(?) 1625. WORKS: *Defence of Plays,* 1580(?); *An Alarum against Usurers,* 1584; *Scillaes Metamorphysis,* 1589 (later edn., called: *A most pleasant historie of Glaucus and Scilla,* 1610); *Rosalynde* (anon.), 1590; *Robert, second Duke of Normandy,* 1591; *Catharos* (anon.), 1591; *Euphues Shadow* (anon.), 1592; *Phillis,* 1593; *Life and death of William Longbeard* (anon.), 1593; *The Wounds of Civill War,* 1594; *A Looking Glasse for London* (with Greene), 1594; *A Fig for Momus* (anon.), 1595; *The Divel Conjured* (anon.), 1596; *A Margarite of America,* 1596; *Wits Miserie,* 1596; *Prosopopeia,* 1596; *Paradoxes* (anon.), 1602; *A Treatise of the Plague,* 1603. He *translated:* Josephus' Works, 1602; Seneca's Works, 1614; *A Learned Summary of Du Bartas,* 1625. COLLECTED WORKS: ed. by E. Gosse, with *memoir,* 1878-82.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 172

SEE: N. Burton Paradise, *Thomas Lodge,* 1931; Pat M. Ryan, *Thomas Lodge, Gentleman,* 1958.

Rosalynde (1590)

Placing Lodge's novel by the side of other productions of the same class, we cannot hesitate to declare it a very amusing and varied composition, full of agreeable and graceful invention (for we are aware of no foreign authority for any of the incidents), and with much natural force and simplicity in the style of the narrative. That it is here and there disfigured by the faults of the time, by forced conceits, by lowness of allusion and expression, and sometimes by inconsistency and want of decorum in the characters, cannot be denied. These are errors which the judgment and genius of Shakespeare taught him to avoid; but the admitted extent and nature of his general obligations to Lodge afford a high tribute to the excellence of that "original," which Steevens pronounced "worthless."

John Payne Collier, 1843, *Shakespeare's Library,* Introduction to Lodge's *Rosalynd,* vol. I pp. 198, 199, 202

If Sidney had no followers in the line of ideal fiction, he had at least a rival with the novel readers of the time in the person of Thomas Lodge. The latter's *Rosalind,* which appeared about the same time as the *Arcadia,* resembles the latter in its essence, being an attempt to fuse in one narrative the best features of the heroic and pastoral school of fiction. It is possible that Lodge may have received some useful hints from the efforts of Sidney, but at all events his story is more compact, more logical, and consequently more readable. Certain situations of the romances of chivalry are here repeated and the pastoral notion of the heroine's disguise in man's dress plays a prominent part in the plot.

F. M. Warren, 1895, *A History of the Novel Previous to the Seventeenth Century,* p. 338

General

Lodge and Greene are the only imitators of Lyly who have atoned for affectation of style by any felicity of genius or invention.

John Dunlop, 1814-45, *The History of Fiction*

His lines [*Wounds of Civil War*] possess not the slightest approach to flexibility; they invariably consist of ten sylables, with a pause at the end of every line—"each alley like its brother;" the ocasional use of the triplet is the only variety. Lodge's tragedy has the appearance of a most correct and laboured performance; and the result is that of insufferable tediousness.

Charles Knight, 1849, *Studies of Shakspere,* bk. i, ch. vi, p. 30

In considering Lodge's literary character, it may be remarked that he belongs to a class of writers, the Greenes, Lylys, Marlowes, and Peeles, displaying poetical and dramatic genius, not indeed of the highest order, but from the versatility of their talents, and the early period in which they flourished, as the precursors of our greater English dramatists, not likely to be soon forgotten.

David Laing, 1853, ed. *A Defence of Poetry, etc.,* Introduction, p. lviii

It may, however, be acknowledged that Lodge's nature was not specially fitted for the sonnet form of composition; he was not sufficiently patient and meditative to elaborate intricate stanzas. His lines have on them the dewy freshness of an impulsive gush,—a freshness off which the dew has not been brushed by the travail of thought; and the opening of his sonnets in many cases leads us to expect better things than we find as we proceed when the leading idea has been hammered out into a quatorzain.

William Minto, 1874-85, *Characteristics of English Poets,*

In some respects Lodge is superior to most of the lyrical poets of his time. He is certainly the best of the Euphuists, and no one rivalled him in the creation of a dreamy scene, "out of space, out of time," where the loves and jousts of an ideal chivalry could be pleasantly tempered by the tending of sheep. His romances, with their frequent interludes of fine verse, are delightful reading, although the action flags, and there is simply no attempt at characterisation. A very courtly and knightly spirit of morality perfumes the stately sentences, laden with learned allusion and flowing imagery; the lovers are devoted beyond belief, the knights are braver, the shepherds wiser, the nymphs more lovely and more flinty-hearted than tongue can tell. . . . Among all the Elizabethans, no one borrowed his inspiration more directly from the Italians than Lodge. . . . As a satirist Lodge is weak and tame; as a dramatist he is wholly without skill; as a writer of romances we have seen that he is charming, but thoroughly artificial. It is by his lyrical poetry that he preserves a living place in literature. His best odes and madrigals rank with the finest work of that rich age. In short pieces of an erotic or contemplative character he throws aside all his habitual languor, and surprises the reader, who has been toiling somewhat wearily through the forest of Arden, by the brilliance and rapidity of his verse, by the *elan* of his passion, and by the bright turn of his fancy. In his best songs Lodge shows a command over the more sumptuous and splendid parts of language, that reminds the reader of Marlowe's gift in tragedy; and of all the Elizabethans Lodge is the one who most frequently recalls Shelley to mind.

Edmund Gosse, 1880, *English Poets,* ed. Ward, vol. I, pp. 424, 425

JOHN FLETCHER

1579-1625

Born, at Rye, Dec. 1579. Possibly "pensioner" of Corpus Coll., Camb., 1591; Bible-Clerk, 1593. Early intimacy with Francis Beaumont. Collaborated with him, 1605-14. Died, in London, Aug. 1625; buried at St. Saviour's Southwark, 29 Aug. WORKS: [For plays published under the joint names of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, see above: Beaumont and Fletcher.] *The Faithful Shepherdess,* 1609(?); *The Tragedy of Thierry, King of France* (anon.; possibly by Fletcher), 1621. POSTHUMOUS: *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (published in names of Fletcher and Shakespeare; probably by Fletcher [and Massinger?]), 1634; *The Elder Brother* (published in Fletcher's name; probably written with Beaumont), 1637; *Monsieur Thomas,* 1639; *Wit Without Money* (published in Beaumont and Fletcher's names; probably by Fletcher), 1639; *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife,* 1640; *The Coronation* (anon.), 1640; *The Night Walker* (with Shirley?), 1640.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 100

SEE: Clifford Leech, *The John Fletcher Plays,* 1962; also see page 270.

Personal

Meeting once in a Tavern, to contrive the rude draught of a Tragedy, Fletcher undertook to kill the King therein; whose words being overheard by a listener (though his Loyalty not to be blamed herein), he was accused of High Treason; till, the mistake soon appearing, that the plot was only against a Dramatick and Scenical King, all wound off in merriment. Nor could it be laid to Fletcher's charge, what Ajax doth to Ulysses:

> . . . Nihil hic *Diomede* remoto.
> "When *Diomede* was gone,
> He could do nought alone."

For, surviving his Partner, he wrote good Comedies himself, though inferiour to the former; and no wonder, if a single thread was not so strong as a twisted one.

Thomas Fuller, 1662, *The Worthies of England*, ed. Nichols, vol. II, p. 168

Mr. John Fletcher, poet: in the great plague, 1625, a knight of Norfolk (or Suffolke) invited him into the countrey. He sayed but to make himself a suite of cloathes, and while it was makeing, fell sick of the plague and dyed. This I had (1688) from his tayler, who is now a very old man, and clarke of St. Mary Overy's.

John Aubrey, 1669-96, *Brief Lives*, ed. Clark, vol. I, p. 254

The Faithful Shepherdess (1609)

Fletcher's volubility is against more than his metre: he seems often to throw his words at thoughts in the hope of hitting them off by hazard, but he misses them altogether. His light-headed shafts fall short of their mark. When they do touch, however, it is with the irradiating effect if not the force of thunderbolts: this has an inexpressible charm. After all we have heard of *The Faithful Shepherdess*, a fine English Pastoral Drama remains to be written.

George Darley, 1840, ed. *Works of Beaumont and Fletcher*, Introduction, vol. I, p. lii

All the qualities of his dramatic verse, its delightful ease and grace, and its overflowing fancifulness, come out in the lyrical speeches of *The Faithful Shepherdess*. Milton himself, though he put a greater volume of imagination and sound into the measure, never gave it such an airy lightness; and we must look onwards to Shelley's "Ariel to Miranda" for an echo to these lyrics, still sweeter than their melody, and to his "Music, when soft voices die" for a fellow to "Weep no more."

Andrew Cecil Bradley, 1880, *English Poets*, ed. Ward, vol. II, p. 44

General

Fletcher's ideas moved slow; his versification, though sweet, is tedious, it stops at every turn; he lays line upon line, making up one after the other, adding image to image so deliberately, that we see their junctures. Shakespeare mingles everything, runs line into line, embarrasses sentences and metaphors; before one idea has burst its shell, another is hatched and clamorous for disclosure. Another striking difference between Fletcher and Shakespeare, is the fondness of the former for unnatural and violent situations. He seems to have thought that nothing great could be produced in an ordinary way. The chief incidents in some of his most admired tragedies show this. Shakespeare had nothing of this contortion in his mind, none of that craving after violent situations, and flights of strained and improbable virtue which I think always betrays an imperfect moral sensibility. The wit of Flecher is excellent like his serious scenes, but there is something strained and far-fetched in both. He is too mistrustful of Nature, he always goes a little on one side of her. Shakespeare chose her without a reserve.

Charles Lamb, 1808, *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare*

No art in the poet, nor accomplishment in the performers, will again restore *A King and No King, Philaster,* or *The Faithful Shepherdess* to the repertoire of acting plays. But in proportion as Fletcher departed from the schools of Shakespeare and Jonson, he acquired a lower but more natural tone, and, with less ambition, was really more successful. He was an artist of the second order, constrained to unnatural and spasmodical movements while he remained in the higher regions of art, but moving gracefully and spontaneously when he descended to the lower.

William Bodham Donne, 1850-58, *Essays on the Drama,* p. 66

Fletcher is seen at his best in his comedies. Few poets have been endowed with a larger share of wit and fancy, freshness and variety. Such plays as *The Wildgoose-Chase* and *Monsieur Thomas* are a feast of mirth from beginning to end. *The Faithful Shepherdess* is (not excepting Ben Jonson's "Sad Shepherd") the sweetest of English pastoral plays; and some of the songs scattered in profusion through Fletcher's works are hardly surpassed by Shakespeare. In tragedy he does not rank with the highest. *Bonduca* and *Valentinian* are impressive works, but inferior to the tragedies that he wrote with Beaumont, *The Maid's Tragedy* and *A King and No King.*

A. H. Bullen, 1889, *Dictionary of National Biography,* vol. XIX, p. 310

His crown of praise is to have created a wholly new and wholly delightful form of mixed comedy or dramatic romance, dealing merely with the humours and sentiments of men, their passions and their chances; to have woven of all these a web of emotion and event with such gay dexterity, to have blended his colours and combined his effects with such exquisite facility and swift light sureness of touch, that we may return once and again from those heights and depths of poetry to which access was forbidden him, ready as ever to enjoy as of old the fresh incomparable charm, the force and ease and grace of life, which fill and animate the radiant world of his romantic invention. Neither before him nor after do we find, in this his special field of fancy and of work, more than shadows or echos of his coming or departing genius.

Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1894, *Studies in Prose and Poetry*, p. 70

FRANCIS BACON
1561-1626

Francis Bacon, Baron Verulam, 1561-1626. Born, at York House, 22 Jan. 1561. At Trinity Coll., Cambridge, April 1573 to March 1575. Admitted at Gray's Inn, 27 June 1575; called to Bar, 27 June 1582. With Sir Amias Paulet's embassy to France, 1576. M.P. for Melcombe Regis, 1584. M.P. for Taunton, 1586. Bencher of Gray's Inn, 1586. M.P. for Liverpool, 1589. Friendship with Earl of Essex begun, 1591. M.P. for Middlesex, 1593. Employed as Learned Counsel to Queen, 1594. M.A., Cambridge, 27 July 1594. *Essays* published, 1597. M.P. for Southampton, 1597. Arrested for debt, Sept. 1598. Took part in trials of Earl of Essex, 5 June 1600 and 19 Feb. 1601. Knighted, 23 July 1603. Appointed on Commission to discuss Union, 1604. Pension of £60 granted as Counsel to the King, Aug. 1604. Married Alice Barnham, 10 May 1606. Speech in Parliament in favour of Union proposals, 17 Feb. 1607. Solicitor-General, 25 June 1607. Attorney-General, 27 Oct. 1613. Prosecutor in Earl of Somerset's trial, 25 May 1616. Privy Councillor, 9 June 1616. Lord Keeper, 7 March 1617. Lord Chancellor, 7 Jan. 1618. Created Baron Verulam, 12 July 1618. Prosecution of Sir Walter Raleigh, 1618; of Earl of Suffolk, 1619; of Sir Henry Yelverton, 1620. *Novum Organum* published, Oct. 1620. Created Viscount St. Alban, 27 Jan. 1621. Tried for bribery, and sentenced to deprivation of office, fine of £40,000 and imprisonment in Tower, 3 May 1621. Partial mitigation of sentence by King, Sept. 1621. Died, 9 April 1626. Buried at St. Michael's Church, St. Albans. WORKS: *Essays*, 1597; *Declaration of the practises and treasons attempted . . . by Robert late Earle of Essex* (anon.), 1601; *Apologie of the Earle of Essex . . . Penned by himself* (or rather, by Bacon), 1603; *Brief Discourse touching the happie Union of the Kingdomes of England and Scotland* (anon.), 1603; *Apologie in certaine imputations concerning the late Earle of Essex*, 1604; *Certaine considerations touching the better*

pacification . . . of the Church of England (anon.), 1604; *Of the Proficience and Advancement of Learning,* 1605; *De Sapientia Veterum,* 1609; *Charge Concerning Duels,* 1614; *Instauratio Magna (Novum Organum),* 1620; *Historie of the Raigne of King Henry the Seventh,* 1622; *Historia Naturalis et Experimentalis ad condendam Philosophiam (Historia Ventorum),* 1622; *De Dignitate et Augmentis Scientiarum,* 1623; *Historia Vitæ et Mortis,* 1623; *Translation of Certaine Psalmes,* 1625; *Apophthegmes new and old,* 1625. POSTHUMOUS: *Sylva Sylvarum,* 1627; *Considerations touching a warre with Spaine,* 1629; *The Use of the Law* (anon.) in *The Lawyers' Light . . . By I. D.,* 1629; *Certaine Miscellany Works,* 1629; *Operum Moralium et Civilium tomus,* 1638; *The Elements of the Common Lawes of England,* 1640; *A Wise and Moderate Discourse concerning Church Affaires* (anon.), 1641; *Remaines,* 1648; *The Felicity of Queen Elizabeth,* 1651; *Scripta in Naturali et Universali Philosophia,* 1653; *The Mirrour of State and Eloquence,* 1656; *Resuscitatio,* 1657; *Opuscula varia posthuma,* 1658; *New Atlantis,* 1660; *Opera Omnia,* 1665; *Letters,* 1702; *A Conference of Pleasure,* 1870; *The Promu of Formularies and Elegancies,* 1883.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 13

SEE: *Works,* ed. James Spedding, Robert L. Ellis, and Douglas D. Heath, 1863-72, 15 v.; *Works* (abridged), ed. J. M. Robertson, 1905; R. W. Church, *Bacon,* 1884; M. Sturt, *Francis Bacon,* 1932; Loren Eiseley, *Francis Bacon and the Modern Dilemma,* 1962.

PERSONAL

Sir Francis Bacon was married yesterday to his young wench in Maribone Chapel. He was clad from top to toe in purple, and hath made himself and his wife such store of fine raiments of cloth of silver and gold that it draws deep into her portion. The dinner was kept at his father-in-law Sir John Packington's lodging, over against the Savoy, where his chief guests were the three knights, Cope, Hicks, and Beeston; and upon this conceit (as he said himself), that since he could not have my Lord of Salisbury in person, which he wished, he would have him at least in his representative body.

Sir Dudley Carleton, 1606, *Letter, May 11th*

There happened in my time one noble speaker, who was full of gravity in his speaking. His language (where he could spare or pass by a jest) was nobly censorious. No man ever spake more neatly, more pressly, more weightily, or suffered less emptiness, less idleness, in what he uttered. No member of his speech, but consisted of his own graces. His hearers could not cough, or look aside from him, without loss. He commanded where he spoke; and had his judges angry and pleased at his devotion. No man had their affections more in his power. The fear of every man that heard him was,

lest he should make an end. . . . My conceit of his person was never increased toward him by his place, or honours: but I have and do reverence him, for the greatness that was only proper to himself, in that he seemed to me ever, by his work, one of the greatest men, and most worthy of admiration, that had been in many ages. In his adversity I ever prayed, that God would give him strength; for greatness he could not want. Neither could I condole in a word or syllabel for him, as knowing no accident could do harm to virtue, but rather help to make it manifest.

Ben Jonson, *Timber, or Discoveries,* 1630-37, lxxviii, lxxx, *Works,* ed. Gifford and Cunningham, vol. IX, pp. 163, 165

None can character him to the life, save himself. He was in parts more than a man; who in any liberal profession might be whatsoever he would himself: a great honourer of ancient authors, yet a great deviser and practiser of new ways in learning: privy counsellor, as to king James, so to nature itself, diving into many of her abstruse mysteries. New conclusions he would dig out with mattocks of gold and silver; not caring what his experience cost him, expending on the trials of nature all and more than he got by the trials at the bar; posterity being the better for his—though he the worse for his own—dear experiments. He and his servants had all in common; the men never wanting what their master had; and thus what came flowing in unto him was sent flying away from him, who, in giving of rewards, knew no bounds but the bottom of his own purse. Wherefore, when king James heard that he had given ten pounds to an under-keeper, by whom he had sent him a buck, the king said merrily, "I and he shall both die beggars;" which was condemnable prodigality in a subject. He lived many years after; and in his books will ever survive: in the reading whereof, modest men commend him in what they do—condemn themselves in what they do not—understand, as believing the fault in their own eyes, and not in the object.

Thomas Fuller, 1655, *The Church History of Britain,* ed. Nichols, vol. III, bk. x, par. 22, p. 290

He was a man of strong, clear, powerful, imagination; his genius was searching and invincible, and of this I need give no other proof than his style itself; which, as, for the most part, it describes men's minds as well as pictures do their bodies, so it did his above all men living; the course of it vigorous and majestic; the wit, bold and familiar; the comparisons, fetched out of the way, and yet the most easy; in all, expressing a soul equally skilled in men and nature.

Thomas Sprat, 1667, *History of the Royal Society of London*

All that were *great and good* loved and honoured him. . . . He was a ηαιδεραστης. His Ganimeds and favourites tooke bribes; but his lordship alwayes gave judgement *secundum aequum et bonum*. His decrees in Chancery stand firme, i. e. there are fewer of his decrees reverst then of any other Chancellor. . . . He had a delicate, lively hazel eie; Dr. Harvey told me it was like the eie of a viper. . . . Mr. Hobbs told me the cause of his lordship's death was trying an experiment: viz., as he was taking the aire in a coach with Dr. Witherbone (a Scotchman, Physitian to the King) towards High-gate, snow lay on the ground, and it came into my lord's thoughts, why flesh might not be preserved in snow, as in salt. They were resolved they would try the experiment presently. They alighted out of the coach, and went into a poore woman's howse at the bottome of Highgate hill, and bought a hen, and made the woman exenterate it, and then stuffed the bodie with snow, and my lord did help to doe it himselfe. The snow so chilled him, that he immediately fell so extremely ill, that he could not returne to his lodgings (I suppose then at Graye's Inne), but went to the earle of Arundell's house at Highgate, where they putt him into a good bed warmed with a panne, but it was a damp bed that had not been layn-in in about a yeare before, which gave him such a cold that in 2 or 3 dayes, as I remember he told me, he dyed of suffocation.

John Aubrey, 1669-96, *Brief Lives*, ed. Clark, vol. I, pp. 70, 71, 72, 75

He was the great ornament of his age and nation; and nought was wanting to render him the ornament of human nature itself, but that strength of mind which might check his intemperate desire of preferment, that could add nothing to his dignity, and might restrain his profuse inclination to expense, that could be requisite neither for his honour nor entertainment. His want of economy, and his indulgence to servants, had involved him in necessities; and, in order to supply his prodigality, he had been tempted to take bribes, by the title of presents, and that in a very open manner, from suitors in chancery. . . . The Lords insisted on a particular confession of all his corruptions. He acknowledged twenty-eight articles; and was sentenced to pay a fine of forty thousand pounds, to be imprisoned in the Tower during the King's pleasure, to be for ever incapable of any office, place, or employment, and never again to sit in Parliament, or come within the verge of the court. This dreadful sentence, dreadful to a man of nice sensibility to honour, he survived five years; and, being released in a little time from the Tower, his genius, yet unbroken, supported itself amidst involved circumstances and a depressed spirit, and shone out in literary productions, which have made his guilt or weaknesses be forgotten or overlooked by posterity.

David Hume, 1745-62, *History of England, James I*, Appendix

The moral qualities of Bacon were not of a high order. We do not say that he was a bad man. He was not inhuman or tyrannical. He bore with meekness his high civil honours, and the far higher honours gained by his intellect. He was very seldom, if ever, provoked into treating any person with malignity and insolence. No man more readily held up the left cheek to those who had smitten the right. No man was more expert at the soft answer which turneth away wrath. He was never accused of intemperance in his pleasures. His even temper, his flowing courtesy, the general respectability of his demeanor, made a favourable impression on those who saw him in situations which do not severally try the principles. His faults were —we write it with pain—coldness of heart and meanness of spirit. He seems to have been incapable of feeling strong affection, of facing great dangers, of making great sacrifices.

Thomas Babington Macaulay, 1834, "Lord Bacon,"
Edinburgh Review; Critical and Miscellaneous Essays

He idolized state and magnificence in his own person; the brilliancy of his robes and the blaze of his equipage his imagination seemed to feed on; he loved to be gazed on in the streets, and to be wondered at in the cabinet: but, with this feminine weakness, this philosopher was still so philosophic as to scorn the least prudential care of his fortune; so that, while he was enamoured of wealth, he could not bring himself down to the love of money. Participating in the corruptions of the age, he was himself incorruptible: the Lord Chancellor never gave a partial or unjust sentence; and Rushworth has told us, that not one of his decrees was ever reversed. Such a man was not made to crouch and to fawn, to breathe the infection of a corrupted court, to make himself the scapegoat in the mysterious darkness of court-intrigues; but he was this man of wretchedness!

Isaac Disraeli, 1841, "Bacon," *Amenities of Literature*

Bacon's record is unusully full, and as his life presented to himself many doubtful problems for action, it has left to us many questionable actions for criticism; and among them not a few which he would not himself have repeated or attempted to justify. One thing, however, must be admitted to his advantage. Of the contemporaries whose opinion of him is known to us, those who saw him nearest in his private life give him the best character.

James Spedding, 1878, *An Account of the Life and Times of Francis Bacon,* vol. II, p. 654

Probably in consenting to contribute to the destruction of his friend, Bacon was acting under, what must have seemed to him, considerable pressure. If

he had refused the task assigned to him by the Crown, he must have given up all chance of the Queen's favour and with it all hope of promotion. Very inferior men have made as great, or greater, sacrifices; but Bacon was not the man to make such a sacrifice. . . . Bacon had a keen sense of the value of fortune, of the possibilities of a learned leisure, of the importance of his own colossal plans for the benefit of the human race; on the other hand he had a very dull sense of the claims of honour and friendship. Forced to choose between prosperity and friendship, he preferred to be prosperous even at the cost of facilitating the ruin of a friend for whom ruin, in any case, was ultimately inevitable.

Edwin Abbott Abbott, 1885, *Francis Bacon, An Account of His Life and Works,* pp. 81, 82

Bacon's conduct to Essex has been the subject of more vituperation than perhaps any other single act of any other single man. It has been denounced as mean and treacherous, dark, mournful, and shameful; it has been used to point half the morals and adorn half the tales against ingratitude for the last two centuries. Mr. Spedding has devoted a whole volume to this theme, and arranged the documents relating to the question in a manner which calls for a modification of the popular judgment similar if not equal to that achieved by Carlyle's commentary on the letters of Cromwell. In an age when a good courtier has come to be considered as the reverse of a good citizen, men will continue to wish that Bacon had acted differently; but he must be acquitted of anything like treachery.

John Nichol, 1888, *Francis Bacon, His Life and Philosophy,* part i, p. 46

Essays (1597)

The virtue of these *Essays* is too well allowed to require any comment. Without the elegance of Addison, or the charming egotism of Montaigne, they have acquired the widest circulation: and if Bacon had written no more, they would have bequeathed his name undying to posterity. Burke preferred them to the rest of his writings, and Dr. Johnson observed that "their excellence and value consists in their being the observations of a strong mind operating upon life, and, in consequence, you will find there what you seldom find in other books."

Edmond Malone, 1794, *Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds*

The small volume to which he has given the title of *Essays,* the best known and the most popular of all his works. It is one of those where the superiority of his genius appears to the greatest advantage; the novelty and depth

of his reflections often receiving a strong relief from the triteness of the subject. It may be read from beginning to end in a few hours; and yet after the twentieth perusal one seldom fails to remark in it something overlooked before. This, indeed, is a characteristic of all Bacon's writings, and is only to be accounted for by the inexhaustible ailment they furnish to our own thoughts, and the sympathetic activity they impart to our torpid faculties.

Dugald Stewart, 1815-21, *First Preliminary Dissertation, Encyclopædia Britannica*

Bacon's *Essays* are the portrait of an ambitious and profound calculator,—a great man of the vulgar sort. Of the upper world of man's being they speak few and faint words.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1838-93, *Milton, Works,* Riverside ed., vol. XII, p. 152

Nothing can be more loose than the structure of the essays. There is no art, no style, and, except in a few, the political ones, no order: thoughts are put down and left unsupported, unproved, undeveloped. In the first form of the ten, which composed the first edition of 1597, they are more like notes of analysis or tables of contents; they are austere even to meagreness. But the general character continues in the enlarged and expanded ones of Bacon's later years. . . . But these short papers say what they have to say without preface, and in literary undress, without a superfluous word, without the joints and bands of structure: they say it in brief, rapid sentences which come down, sentence after sentence like the strokes of a great hammer.

Richard William Church, 1884-88, *Bacon, (English Men of Letters),* p. 273

Less than seventy years after the death of Bacon his *Essays* were so completely forgotten that when extracts from them were discovered in the common-place book of a deceased lady of quality, they were supposed to be her own, were published and praised by people as clever as Congreve, went through several editions, and were not detected until within the present century.

Edmund Gosse, 1892, "Tennyson—and After," *Questions at Issue,* p. 190

The Advancement of Learning (1605)

Neither the most liberal of the professions, nor even the wider field of politics and legislation, could supply to the genius of Bacon a sufficient

sphere of activity; and turning aside for a short space from the career of worldly ambition, in which he had many competitors, to that in which he marched unrivalled and alone, he completed and gave to the world in 1605 his immortal work on the *Advancement of Learning*. . . . The experience of age has shown, that he who assumes the character of a reformer in the art of reasoning, an expositor of the errors of the schools, soars above the region of popular applause only to excite the alarms, or encounter the hostility, of the learned; whose pride, whose prejudices and whose interests he offends or threatens. Thus, whilst a few inquisitive and enlightened spirits, such as Jonson and Wotton and Raleigh, hailed with delight and awe the discoveries of their great contemporary, born to establish an era in the progress of the human mind, the erudite disciples of ancient error busied themselves in depreciating and decrying what they would not or could not understand.

Lucy Aikin, 1822, *Memoirs of the Court of King James the First,* vol. I, pp. 193, 195

The work is dedicated to King James the First, and its introduction inspires a mingled sentiment of admiration of the boldness and grandeur of the design which it announces, and of heart-ache at the depth of degradation to which it sinks in the servile adulation with which it besmears the king. . . . The stupendous magnitude of this undertaking, the courtly cunning, ingenuity, and meanness of suggesting it to the King as if it was an enterprise of his own, the lofty consciousness of its sublimity, and the sly implied disclaimer of it as anything more on the part of the author than a mere speculative whim to be moulded into form and substance, are all deserving of profound meditation—of more than I can give. He proceeds then to enumerate and to refute the objections against learning—of divines, of politicians, as arising from the fortunes, manners, or studies of learned men. He discusses the diseases of learning—the peccant humors which have not only given impediment to the proficiency of learning, but have given occasion to the traducement thereof. And he closes the book with a copious and cheering exhibition of the dignity of learning—a theme upon which I follow him with delight. The style is a continuous and perpetual citation of classical and scriptural quotations.

John Quincy Adams, 1844, *Diary, July 19, Memoirs,* ed. C. F. Adams, vol. XII, p. 72

Marked the first decisive appearance of the new philosophy. . . . He did not thoroughly understand the older philosophy which he attacked. His revolt from the waste of human intelligence which he conceived to be owing to the adoption of a false method of investigation blinded him to the real

value of deduction as an instrument of discovery; and he was encouraged in his contempt for it as much by his own ignorance of mathematics as by the non-existence in his day of the great deductive sciences of physics and astronomy. Nor had he a more accurate prevision of the method of modern science.

John Richard Green, 1874, *Short History of the English People,* ch. ix

The Advancement is written, or finished at least, obviously in too great haste; the Second Book is sometimes almost slovenly, and the close of it leaves us nowhere. But the opening part in which Bacon sums up first the discredits and then the dignity of learning, defending wisdom, and justifying it to its sons, remains one of the great performances of the seventeenth century. The matter of it is obsolete, human knowledge having progressed so far forwards and backwards since 1605; and something dry and unripe in Bacon's manner—which mellowed in later life—diminishes our pleasure in reading what is none the less a very noble work, and one intended to be the prologue to the author's vast edifice of philosophical inquiry. At this point, however, he unluckily determined to abandon English brick for Latin stone.

Edmund Gosse, 1897, *Short History of Modern English Literature,* p. 131

Novum Organum (1620)

Most valuable of all his works, and by him most highly valued. It is written in a plain unadorned style in aphorisms, invariably stated by him to be the proper style for philosophy, which, conscious of its own power, ought to go forth "naked and unarmed;" but, from the want of symmetry and ornament, from its abstruseness, from the novelty of its terms, and from the imperfect state in which it was published, it has, although the most valuable, hitherto been too much neglected; but it will not so continue. The time has arrived, or is fast approaching, when the pleasures of intellectual pursuit will have so deeply pervaded society, that they will, to a considerable extent, form the pleasures of our youth; and the lamentation in *The Advancement of Learning* will be diminished or pass away.

Basil Montagu, 1834, *The Life of Francis Bacon,* pp. cclxxxiii, ccxcvii, *Bacon's Complete Works*

If Bacon constructed a method to which modern science owes its existence, we shall find its cultivators grateful for the gift, and offering the richest incense at the shrine of a benefactor whose generous labours conducted

them to immortality. No such testimonies, however, are to be found. Nearly two hundred years have gone by, teeming with the richest fruits of human genius, and no grateful disciple has appeared to vindicate the rights of the alleged legislator of science. Even Newton, who was born and educated after the publication of the *Novum Organon,* never mentions the name of Bacon or his system; and the amiable and indefatigable Boyle treated him with the same disrespectful silence. When we are told, therefore, that Newton owes all his discoveries to the method of Bacon, nothing more can be meant than that he proceeded in that path of observation and experiment which had been so warmly recommended in the *Novum Organon;* but it ought to have been added, that the same method was practised by his predecessors; that Newton possessed no secret that was not used by Galileo and Copernicus; and that he would have enriched science with the same splendid discoveries if the name and the writings of Bacon had never been heard of.

Sir David Brewster, 1855, *Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Discoveries of Sir Isaac Newton,* vol. II, p. 402

General

If there were a beam of knowledge derived from God upon any man, in these modern times, it was upon him. For though he was a great reader of books, yet he had not his knowledge from books, but from some grounds or notions from within himself, which notwithstanding, he vented with great caution and circumspection. His book of *Instauratio Magna* (which, in his own account, was the chiefest of his works) was no slight imagination or fancy of his brain; but a settled and concocted notion: the production of many years' labour and travail. I myself have seen at the lease twelve copies of the *Instauration* revised, year by year, one after another; and every year altered and amended in the frame thereof; till, at the last, it came to that model, in which it was committed to the press; as many living creatures do lick their young ones till they bring them to their strength of limbs. In the composing of his books he did rather drive at a masculine and clear expression than at any fineness or affectation of phrases; and would often ask if the meaning were expressed *plainly enough.* As being one that accounted words to be but subservient or ministerial to matter, and not the principal: and if his style were polite, it was because he could do no otherwise. Neither was he given to any light conceits, or descanting upon words: but did ever, purposely and industriously, avoid them. For he held such things to be but digressions or diversions from the scope intended, and to derogate from the weight and dignity of the style.

William Rawley, 1657-61, *Life of Bacon, Resuscitatio*

Who is there, that, upon hearing this name does not instantly recognise everything of genius the most profound, everything of literature the most extensive, everything of discovery the most penetrating, everything of observation on human life the most distinguishing and refined? All these must be instantly recognised, for they are all inseparably associated with the name of Lord Veralum.

Edmund Burke, 1794, *Speech on the Impeachment of Warren Hastings, May 28*

That Shakespeare's appearance upon a soil so admirably prepared was neither marvellous nor accidental is evidenced even by the corresponding appearance of such a contemporary as Bacon. Scarcely can anything be said of Shakespeare's position generally with regard to mediæval poetry which does not also bear upon the position of the renovator Bacon with regard to mediæval philosophy. Neither knew nor mentioned the other, although Bacon was almost called upon to have done so in his remarks upon the theatre of his day. It may be presumed that Shakespeare liked Bacon but little, if he knew his writings and life, that he liked not his ostentation, which, without on the whole interfering with his modesty, recurred too often in many instances; that he liked not the fault-finding which his ill-health might have caused, nor the narrow-mindedness with which he pronounced the histrionic art to be infamous, although he allowed that the ancients regarded the drama as a school for virtue; nor the theoretic precepts of worldly wisdom which he gave forth; nor, lastly, the practical career which he lived. Before his mind, however, if he had fathomed it, he must have bent in reverence. For just as Shakespeare was an interpreter of the secrets of history and of human nature, Bacon was an interpreter of lifeless nature.

G. G. Gervinus, 1849-62, *Shakespeare Commentaries*, tr. Bunnett, p. 884

What is true of Shakespeare is true of Bacon. Bacon thought in parables. Of the astounding versatility of his thought, of the universality of its reach, the subtlety of its discrimination, the practical Machiavellian omniscience of motive good and evil, it is difficult by words to convey any adequate idea. But the plasticity of his thought is always the humble servant of his omnipresent imagination. His intellect is always at the mercy of his fancy for a clothing. All his intellectual facts are wrapt in visions of beautiful illustration.

Bernard Cracroft, 1868, *Essays, Political and Miscellaneous*, vol. II, p. 218

In the matter of diction he uses more obsolete words than either Hooker or Sidney, but he is immeasurably superior to them both in the perspicuity of his sentences which, though occasionally involved, as a rule allow us to see into his thoughts with great distinctness. The aphoristic style of his essays is worthy of all praise, and he may be considered the first English master of antithesis: it was perhaps his work in this direction which gave his peculiar bent to the literature of the early part of the 17th century.

C. R. L. Fletcher, 1881, *The Development of English Prose Style,* p. 10

Bacon was always much more careful of the value of aptness of a thought than of its appearing new and original. Of all great writers he least minds repeating himself, perhaps in the very same words; so that a simile, an illustration, a quotation pleases him, he returns to it—he is never tired of it; it obviously gives him satisfaction to introduce it again and again.

Richard William Church, 1884-88, *Bacon, (English Men of Letters),* p. 29

THE EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

CYRIL TOURNEUR

1575?-1626?

Cyril Tourneur, a dramatist of whom we know only that he served in the Low Countries, and died in Ireland, Feb. 28, 1626, leaving his widow destitute. In 1600 he published his *Transformed Metamorphosis* (discovered in 1872), a satirical poem, marred by pedantic affectations; in 1609 a *Funereal Poem* on Sir Francis Vere; in 1613 an *Elegy* on Prince Henry. His fame rests on two plays, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, printed in 1607, and the (earlier and poorer) *Atheist's Tragedy*, printed in 1611. *The Revenger's Tragedy*, a tangled web of lust and blood, shows tragic intensity, condensed passion, fiery strength of phrase, cynical and bitter mockery. Fleay thinks it the work of Webster. There is a complete edition by Churton Collins (1878); and of the two plays, with two of Webster's, by J. A. Symonds (1888).

Patrick and Groome, eds., 1897, *Chambers's Biographical Dictionary*, p. 922

SEE: *Complete Works*, ed. Allardyce Nicoll, 1929; Fredson T. Bowers, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy, 1587-1642*, 1940.

The reality and life of the dialogue [*Revenger's Tragedy*], in which Vindici and Hippolito first tempt their mother, and then threaten her with death for consenting to the dishonour of their sister, passes any scenical illusion I ever felt. I never read it but my ears tingle, and I feel a hot blush overspread my cheeks, as if I were presently about to proclaim such malefactions of myself as the brothers here rebuke in their unnatural parent, in words more keen and dagger-like than those which Hamlet speaks to his mother. Such power has the passion of shame truly personated, not only to strike guilty creatures unto the soul, but to "appal" even those that are "free."

Charles Lamb, 1808, *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare*

Tourneur was far from having the breadth and the weight of Webster's genius: he does not take so deep a hold of the being of his personages. Yet he is entitled to a high and unique place among the Elizabethan dramatists. There is a piercing intelligence in his grasp of character, a daring vigour and fire in his expression. His two plays show no elaborate study of variety of character; but he burns the chief moods of his principal characters deep into the mind.

William Minto, 1874-85, *Characteristics of English Poets*, p. 357

A great poet, who has stamped deep on every page he has written the expression of a powerful, anomalous, unique genius. . . . High among Tourneur's distinctive merits must also be ranked his singular mastery over the element of language. In graphic intensity of magical expression, he is second only to Shakespeare and Webster. He wields at will subtle, poignant phrase, curt, irritable turn, searching epithet, pregnant epigram, or, again lucid, copious and expansive speech, rising and falling in easy and exquisite harmony with the thought it expresses. In words which burn like fire and brand like vitriol, Vindici clothes his scoffs and mockery; in words which melt like music, Castabella mourns her young lover or pleads with her unnatural step-father. His versification also is, like Shakespeare's on which it is carefully formed, much wider in its range and varied in its mould than is usual with his contemporaries, whose styles are, so far at least as essential attributes are concerned, comparatively uniform and manneristic. . . . Tourneur's great defect as a dramatic poet is undoubtedly the narrowness of his range of vision—of his insight and sympathies—and this is evident in the sketchy and abstract nature of many of his subordinate characters.

John Churton Collins, 1878, ed., *Plays and Poems of Cyril Tourneur,* Introduction, vol. I, pp. xiii, xlvii, lii

THOMAS MIDDLETON
1580-1627

Thomas Middleton, 1570(?)-1627. Born, in London, 1570(?). Student at Gray's Inn, 1593(?). Began to write plays about 1600. Wrote a number of plays and masques. Married (i) Mary Morbeck, 1603(?). After her death he married (ii) Magdalen ——, 1627(?). Appointed City Chronologer, 6 Sept. 1620. Died, at Newington Butts, July 1627; buried in parish church, 4 July. WORKS: *The Wisdom of Solomon Paraphrased,* 1597; *Microcynion* (under initials: T. M.; attrib. to Middleton), 1559; *Master Constable Blurt* (anon.), 1602; *The Blacke Booke* (under initials: T. M.; attrib. to Middleton), 1604; *Father Hubburd's Tales* (under pseud. Oliver Hubburd), 1604; *Michaelmas Terme* (anon.), 1607; *The Phœnix* (anon.), 1607; *A Trick to Catch the Old-One* (under initials: T. M.), 1608; *The Famelie of Love* (anon.), 1608; *Your Five Gallants* [1608]; *A Mad World, my Masters* (under initials: T. M.), 1608; *Sir Robert Sherley,* 1609; *The Roaring Girle* (with Dekker), 1611; *The Triumphs of Truth,* 1613; *Civitatis Amor* (anon.), 1616; *The Tryumphs of Honor and Industry* (under initials: T. M.), 1617; *A Faire Quarrell* (with Rowley), 1617; *The Peacemaker* (anon.; attrib. to Middleton), 1618; *The Inner Temple Masque,* 1619; *The Triumphs of Love and Antiquity,* 1619; *The World*

Tost at Tennis (with Rowley), 1620; *The Sunne in Aries,* 1621; *The Triumphs of Honor and Virtue,* 1622; *The Triumphs of Integrity,* 1623; *A Game at Chess* (anon. [1624], 3rd edn. same year); *The Triumphs of Health and Prosperity,* 1626. POSTHUMOUS: *A Chast Mayd in Cheapeside,* 1630; *The Widdow* (with Jonson and Fletcher), 1652; *The Changeling* (with Rowley), 1653; *The Spanish Gipsie* (with Rowley), 1653; *The Old Law* (with Massinger and Rowley), 1656; *No Wit, No Help like a Woman's,* 1657; *Two new playes; viz., More Dissemblers besides Women, Women Beware Women,* 1657; *The Mayor of Quinborough,* 1661; *Anything for a Quiet Life,* 1662; *The Witch,* 1778. COLLECTED WORKS: ed. by Dyce, 1840; by A. H. Bullen, 1885-86.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 196

SEE: *Works,* ed. A. H. Bullen, 1885-86, 8v., repr. 1965; Samuel Schoenbaum, *Middleton's Tragedies: A Critical Study,* 1955.

PERSONAL

Was born about 1570, and was the son of a gentleman settled in London, whose wife likewise sprang from a London family. It is highly probable that he was at one time a member of one of the Universities,—Cambridge as it would seem, to whose life and ways he frequently refers in his plays with the easy but not unconscious familiarity of the old University man. He may safely be identified with one of the two Thomas Middletons who were admitted to Gray's Inn in 1593 and 1596 respectively,—with the former of these for choice. Thus he passed through the social experiences habitual to young gentlemen of his day before settling down to the labours of his life; and, apart from the evidence of his portrait, it will, I think, be allowed that his dramatic works are, notwithstanding their frequent coarseness, distinguished by a general flavour of the good-breeding from those of such authors as Jonson, Dekker, or Marston.

Adolphus William Ward, 1875-99, *A History of English Dramatic Literature,* vol. II, p. 493

A Game of Chess (1624)

I doubt not but you have heard of our famous play of Gondomar, which hath been followed with extraordinary curiosity, and frequented by all sorts of people, old and young, rich and poor, masters and servants, papists, wise men, &c., churchmen and Scotsmen, as Sir Henry Wotton, Sir Albert Morton, Sir Benjamin Rudyard, Sir Thomas Lake, and a world besides. The Lady Smith would have gone if she could have persuaded me to go thither. I am not so sour nor so severe but that I would willingly have attended her,

but I could not sit so long, for we must have been there before one o'clock at farthest to find any room. They counterfeited his person to the life, with all his graces and faces, and had gotten, they say, a cast suit of his apparel for the purpose, and his letter, wherein the world says there lacked nothing but a couple of asses to carry it, and Sir George Petre or Sir Tobie Matthew to bear him company. But the worst is, playing him, they played somebody else, for which they are forbidden to play that or any other play till the King's further pleasure be known; and they may be glad if they can so escape Scot-free. The wonder lasted but nine days, for so long they played it.

Nicholas Chamberlain, 1624, *Letter to Sir Dudley Carleton, Court and Times of James I,* vol. II, p. 472

The literary merits of this dramatic allegory are by no means of a high order, and the political views shadowed forth in it are, so far as it is possible to judge, of that reckless sort which usually result from an endeavour to suit the current humour of popular sentiment. But while the historical student will not fail to observe with what strength public opinion must have run in the direction of the sentiments of this piece, for its author to have ventured upon producing it,—and for it to have passed the censorship of the Master of the Revels,—neither will literary criticism pass by unheeded so singular a composition. This play, which Ben Jonson is hardly unjust in alluding to as "poor," is in fact the solitary work with which the Elisabethan drama fairly attempted to match the political comedies of Aristophanes. No literary species can spring out of the earth in a single day.

Adolphus William Ward, 1875-99, *A History of English Dramatic Literature,* vol. II, p. 536

The play which brought Middleton into prison, and earned for the actors a sum so far beyond parallel as to have seemed incredible till the fullest evidence was procured, is one of the most complete and exquisite works of artistic ingenuity and dexterity that ever excited or offended, enraptured or scandalized an audience of friends or enemies: the only work of English poetry which may properly be called Aristophanic. It has the same depth of civic seriousness, the same earnest ardour and devotion to the old cause of the old country, the same solid fervour of enthusiasm and indignation, which animated the third great poet of Athens against the corruption of art by the sophistry of Euripides and the corruption of manhood by the sophistry of Socrates. The delicate skill of the workmanship can only be appreciated by careful and thorough study.

A. C. Swinburne, 1886, "Thomas Middleton," *The Nineteenth Century,* vol. 19, p. 146

The Changeling

The character of De Flores in this play has in it a strangeness of iniquity, such as we think is hardly paralleled in the whole range of the Elizabethan drama. The passions of this brute-imp are not human. They are such as might be conceived of as springing from the union of animal with fiendish impulses, in a nature which knew no law outside of its own lust, and was as incapable of a scruple as of sympathy.

Edwin P. Whipple, 1859-68, *The Literature of the Age of Elizabeth,* p. 125

Regarded as an artistic whole, *The Changeling* cannot challenge comparison with *The Maid's Tragedy, The Broken Heart,* or *The Duchess of Malfi.* It has not the sustained tragic interest of those masterpieces; but there is one scene in *The Changeling* which, for appalling depth of passion, is not merely unsurpassed, but, I believe, unequalled outside Shakespeare's greatest tragedies.

A. H. Bullen, 1885, ed., *The Works of Thomas Middleton,* Introduction, vol. I, p. lx

Women Beware Women

Middleton's style was not marked by any peculiar quality of its own, but was made up, in equal proportions, of the faults and excellences common to his contemporaries. In his *Women beware Women* there is a rich marrowy vein of internal sentiment, with fine occasional insight into human nature and cool cutting irony of expression. He is lamentably deficient in the plot and *dénouement* of the story.

William Hazlitt, 1820, *Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*

The tragedy of *Women Beware Women,* whether or not it be accepted as the masterpiece of Middleton, is at least an excellent example of the facility and fluency and equable promptitude of style which all students will duly appreciate and applaud in the riper and completer work of this admirable poet. It is full to overflowing of noble eloquence, of inventive resource and suggestive effect, of rhetorical affluence and theatrical ability. The opening or exposition of the play is quite masterly: and the scene in which the forsaken husband is seduced into consolation by the temptress of his wife is worthy of all praise for the straightforward ingenuity and the serious delicacy by which the action is rendered credible and the situation endurable. But I fear that few or none will be found to disagree with my opinion that no such approbation or tolerance can be reasonably extended so as to cover or condone the offences of either the underplot or the upshot

of the play. The one is repulsive beyond redemption by elegance of style, the other is preposterous beyond extenuation on the score of logic or poetical justice.

Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1886, "Thomas Middleton," *The Nineteenth Century*, vol. 19, p. 148

MICHAEL DRAYTON
1563-1631

Michael Drayton, 1563-1631. Born, at Hartshill, Warwickshire, 1563. Probably page in household of Sir Henry Goodere of Powlesworth. First work published (and suppressed), 1591. Wrote many poetical works. Wrote for stage, 1597-1602. Esquire to Sir Walter Aston, 1603. Probably not married. Died, 1631. Buried in Westminster Abbey. WORKS: *The Harmonie of the Church*, 1591 (suppressed; reissued as *A Heavenly Harmonie*, 1610); *Idea*, 1593; *The Legend of Piers Gaveston*, 1593; *Matilda*, 1594; *Endymion and Phœbe* [1594]; *Ideas Mirrour*, 1594; *Mortimeriados*, 1596 (reissued as *The Barrons' Wars*, 1603); *Poemes Lyrick and Pastorall* 1605[?], *England's Heroicall Epistles*, 1597; *The first part of the . . . Life of Sir John Oldcastle* (probably by Munday, Drayton, and others), 1600; *To the Majestie of King James*, 1603; *A Pæan Triumphall*, 1604; *The Owle*, 1604; *Moyses in a Map of his Miracles*, 1604; *Poems*, 1605; *Poems Lyrick and Pastorall: Odes, Eglogs, etc.*, 1606[?]; *The Historie of the Life and Death of the Lord Cromwell*, 1609; *Poly-Olbion, pt. i*, [1612]; *pt. ii*, 1622; *Poems*, 1619; *Certain Elegies* (anon., with Beaumont and others), 1620; *The Battaile of Agincourt, etc.*, 1627; *The Muses Elizium*, 1630; *Noah's Floud* (anon.), 1630. He contrib. verses to Morley's *First Book of Ballets*, 1595; Middleton's *Legend of Duke Humphrey*, 1600; DeSerres' *Perfect Use of Silk-wormes*, 1607; *Davies' Holy Rood*, 1609; Murray's *Sophonisba*, 1611; Tuke's *Discourse against Painting . . . of Women*, 1616; Chapman's *Hesiod*, 1618; Munday's *Primaleon of Greece*, 1619; Vicars' *Manuductio*, 1620(?); Holland's *Naumachia*, 1622; Sir J. Beaumont's *Bosworth Field*, 1629. COLLECTED WORKS: in 1 vol., 1748; in 4 vols., 1753; ed. by J. P. Collier, 1856.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors*, p. 87

SEE: *Complete Works*, ed. J. William Hebel, Kathleen Tillotson, and Bernard H. Newdigate, 1931-41, 5v.; Bernard H. Newdigate, *Drayton and His Circle*, 1941; Carol Maddison, *Apollo and the Nine: A History of the Ode*, 1960.

PERSONAL

Drayton was never married, and little is known of his private life. He loved a lady of Conventry, to whom he promises an immortality he had not been able to confer.

Anna Brownell Jameson, 1829, *The Loves of the Poets*, vol. I, p. 263

In person, he was a swart little man, full of energy and an enthusiastic sense of his own powers; erudite, laborious, versatile; noted for the respectability of his life, and distinguished by the ardour of his orthodox and patriotic sentiments. I doubt whether he had any special call to poetry beyond the contagion of circumstances; ambition made his verses. . . . Drayton has a suspicious pride in the exercise of his gift: originality and versatility are the two qualities that he boasts of, as if he had overmastered the muse by intellectual force rather than won her by natural affinity.

William Minto, 1875-85, *Characteristics of English Poets,* p. 206

Poly-Olbion (1612-22)

As Joannes Honterus, in Latin verse, wrote three books of Cosmography, with geographical tables; so Michael Drayton is now in penning in English verse, a poem called Poly-olbion [which is] geographical and hydrographical of all the forests, woods, mountains, fountains, rivers, lakes, floods, baths [spas], and springs that be in England.

Francis Meres, 1598, *Palladis Tamia*

When I first undertook this Poem, or, as some very skilful in this kind have pleased to term it, this Herculean labour, I was by some virtuous friends persuaded, that I should receive much comfort and encouragement therein; and for these reasons: First, that it was a new, clear, way, never before gone by any; then, that it contained all the Delicacies, Delights, and Rarities of this renowned Isle, interwoven with the Histories of the Britans, Saxons, Normans, and the later English: And further that there is scarcely any of the Nobility or Gentry of this land, but that he is some way or other by his Blood interested therein. But it hath fallen out otherwise; for instead of that comfort, which my noble friends (from the freedom of their spirits) proposed as my due, I have met with barbarous ignorance, and base detraction; such a cloud hath the Devil drawn over the world's judgment, whose opinion is in few years fallen so far below all ballatry, that the lethargy is incurable. . . . And as for those cattle whereof I spake before, *Odi profanum vulgus, et arceo,* of which I account them, be they never so great, and so I leave them. To my friends, and the lovers of my labours, I wish all happiness.

Michael Drayton, 1622, *Poly-Olbion, The Second Part,* ed. Hooper, Preface, pp. ix, x

His *Poly-Olbion* is one of the most singular works this country has produced, and seems to me eminently original. The information contained in it is in general so acute, that he is quoted as an authority both by Hearne and Wood. His perpetual allusions to obsolete traditions, remote events, re-

markable facts and personages, together with his curious genealogies of rivers, and his taste for natural history, have contributed to render his work very valuable to the antiquary.

Henry Headley, 1787, *Select Beauties of Ancient English Poetry*

Next to Daniel in time, and much above him in reach of mind, we place Michael Drayton. . . . Drayton's *Polyolbion* is a poem of about 30,000 lines in length, written in Alexandrine couplets; a measure, from its monotony, and perhaps from its frequency in doggerel ballads, not at all pleasing to the ear. It contains a topographical description of England, illustrated with a prodigality of historical and legendary erudition. Such a poem is essentially designed to instruct, and speaks to the understanding more than to the fancy. . . . The style of Drayton is sustained, with extraordinary ability, on an equable line, from which he seldom much deviates, neither brilliant nor prosaic: few or no passages could be marked as impressive, but few are languid or mean. The language is clear, strong, various, and sufficiently figurative; the stories and fictions interspersed, as well as the general spirit and liveliness, relieve the heaviness incident to topographical description. There is probably no poem of this kind, in any other language, comparable together in extent and excellence to the *Polyolbion;* nor can any one read a portion of it without admiration for its learned and highly gifted author. Yet perhaps no English poem, known as well by name, is so little known beyond its name; for, while its immense length deters the common reader, it affords, as has just been hinted, no great harvest for selection, and would be judged very unfairly by partial extracts.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe,* pt. iii, ch. v, par. 44

Huge in length, as well as injudicious in purpose, Drayton's work has seldom perhaps been read from beginning to end; but no one susceptible of poetic beauty can look into any part of it, without being fascinated and longing to read more. There is not in existence any instance so signal, of fine fancy and feeling, and great command of pure and strong language, thrown almost utterly away. Beautiful natural objects, striking national legends, recent facts, and ingenious allegorical and mythological inventions, are all lavished on this thankless design.

William Spalding, 1852-82, *A History of English Literature,* p. 278

General

Drayton is termed "golden-mouthed," for the purity and preciousness of his style and phrase.

Francis Meres, 1598, *Palladis Tamia*

The language of Drayton is free and perspicuous. With less depth of feeling than that which occasionally bursts from Cowley, he is a less excruciating hunter of conceits, and in harmony of expression is quite a contrast to Donne. A tinge of grace and romance pervades much of his poetry: and even his pastorals, which exhibit the most fantastic views of nature, sparkle with elegant imagery. . . . On a general survey, the mass of his poetry has no strength or sustaining spirit adequate to its bulk. There is a perpetual play of fancy on its surface; but the impulses of passion, and the guidance of judgment give it no strong movements nor consistent course. In scenery or in history he cannot command selected views, but meets them by chance as he travels over the track of detail. His great subjects have no interesting centre, no shade for uninteresting things. Not to speak of his dull passages, his description is generally lost in a flutter of whimsical touches. His muse has certainly no strength for extensive flights, though she sports in happy moments on a brilliant and graceful wing.

Thomas Campbell, 1819, *Specimens of the British Poets*

Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* is a work of great length and of unabated freshness and vigour in itself, though the monotony of the subject tires the reader. He describes each place with the accuracy of a topographer, and the enthusiasm of a poet, as if his Muse were the very *genius loci*. His *Heroical Epistles* are also excellent. He has a few lighter pieces, but none of exquisite beauty or grace. His mind is a rich marly soil that produces an abundant harvest, and repays the husbandman's toil, but few flaunting flowers, the garden's pride, grow in it, nor any poisonous weeds.

William Hazlitt, 1820, *Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth,* p. 192

Drayton wrote well in every metre which he attempted: but what he thus says of the Italian stanza may be more truly said of the English one invented by Spenser, and used by him in one of the noblest works of human genius. And he committed a great error when he fixed upon the Alexandrine as the measure in which to write his *Polyolbion;* for of all measures it is that which, in our language, admits the least variety.

Robert Southey, 1835, *Life of Cowper,* p. 300

It was the misfortune of Drayton not to have been a popular poet; which we may infer from his altercations with his book-sellers, and from their frequent practice of prefixing new title pages, with fresher dates, to the first editions of his poems. That he was also in perpetual quarrel with his Muse, appears by his frequent alteration of his poems. He often felt that curse of an infelicitous poet, that his diligence was more active than his creative

power. Drayton was a poet of volume; but his genius was peculiar: from an unhappy facility in composition, in reaching excellence he too often declined into mediocrity. A modern reader may be struck by the purity and strength of his diction: his strong descriptive manner lays hold on the fancy; but he is always a poet of reason, and never of passion. He cannot be considered as a poet of mediocrity, who has written so much above that level; nor a poet who can rank among the highest class, who has often flattened his spirit by its redundance.

Isaac Disraeli, 1841, "Drayton," *Amenities of Literature*

Lyrical sweetness, fertility of invention, richness of descriptive power, are Drayton's most characteristic qualities, but along with these he has the great style of an heroic time. He has, perhaps, little of the dramatic gift, as usually understood, though, as Mr. Symonds has admonished us, much of the so-called dramatic work of the Elizabethans is really lyrical. Besides, Drayton had one essential of the dramatic gift: he could at least make single figures live and move before us. . . . Drayton seems to have exercised no selection upon his materials, but to have followed the chronicler almost slavishly from point to point.

Richard Le Gallienne, 1893-95, *Retrospective Reviews,* vol. II, pp. 50, 52

JOHN DONNE

1571?-1631

Born, in London, 1573. Privately educated. Matric. Hart Hall, Oxford, 23 Oct. 1584. Took no degree. Probably travelled abroad, 1588-91. Admitted to Lincoln's Inn, 6 May 1592. With Earl of Essex to Cadiz, June 1596. Secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton, Aug. 1596 to 1601. Wrote many poems and satires. Married secretly Anne More, niece of Lady Egerton, Dec.(?) 1600. Dismissed from secretaryship when marriage was discovered. Lived at a friend's house at Pyrford till 1604; then with brother-in-law, Sir Thomas Grymes, at Peckham; and subsequently lived at Mitcham. Gradually obtained favour at Court of James I. Degree of M.A., Oxford, conferred, 10 Oct. 1610. To Germany, France and Belgium with Sir Robert Drury, Nov. 1611 to Aug. 1612. Studied theology. Ordained, Jan. 1615, and appointed Chaplain to King. Degree of D.D., Cambridge, granted at King's request, March 1615. Rector of Keyston, Hants, Jan. 1616; of Sevenoaks, July 1616. Divinity Reader to Lincoln's Inn, Oct. 1616 to Feb. 1622. Wife died, 15 Aug. 1617. To Germany with Lord Doncaster, as Chaplain, April 1619. Dean of St. Paul's, 27 Nov. 1621. Prolocuter to Convocation, 1623 and 1624. Rector of Blunham, Beds, 1622; Vicar of St. Dunstan's-in-the-West, 1623. Died, in London, 31 March 1631. Buried in St. Paul's Cathedral. WORKS: *Pseudo-Martyr,* 1610; *Conclave Ignatii,* 1610(?)

(only two copies known); an English version of preceding, *Ignatius his Conclave* (anon.), 1611; *An Anatomy of the World* (anon.), 1611; *The Progress of the Soule* (anon.), 1621; *A Sermon* [on Judges xx. 15], 1622; *A Sermon* [on Acts i. 8], 1622; *Encænia,* 1623; *Devotions upon Urgent Occasions,* 1624 (2nd edn. same year); *The first Sermon preached to King Charles,* 1625; *A Sermon preached to the King's M^tie,* 1626; *Four Sermons,* 1625; *A Sermon of Commemoration of the Lady Davers,* 1627; *Death's Duell,* 1630. POSTHUMOUS: *Poems by J. D.,* 1633; *Juvenilia,* 1633; *Six Sermons,* 1634; *LXXX Sermons,* 1640; *βιαθανατος,* 1644; *Poems,* 1649; *Fifty Sermons,* 1649; *Essays in Divinity,* 1651; *Letters to Several Persons of Honour,* 1651; *Paradoxes, Problemes, Essays, etc.,* 1652; *Fasciculus Poematum* (mostly spurious), 1652; *Six and twenty Sermons,* 1660; *A Collection of Letters,* 1660; *Donne's Satyr,* 1662. COLLECTED WORKS: *Poetical Works,* ed. by Izak Walton (3 vols.) 1779(?); *Poems,* ed. by Hannah, 1843; *Unpublished Poems,* ed. by Sir John Simeon, [1856]; *Poems,* ed. by Sir John Simeon, 1858; *Works,* ed. by Alford, 1839; *Poems,* ed. by Grosart (2 vols.), 1872-73. *Life:* by Walton, ed. by Causton, 1855.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 84

SEE: *Poems,* ed. Herbert Grierson, 1912, 2 v., rev. 1929 (OSA); *The Divine Poems,* ed. Helen L. Gardner, 1952; *Songs and Sonnets,* ed. Theodore Redpath, 1956; *The Anniversaries,* ed. Frank Manley, 1963; *The Sermons,* ed. George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, 1953-62, 10 v.; *John Donne's Sermons on the Psalms and Gospels, with a Selection of Prayers and Meditations,* ed. Evelyn M. Simpson, 1964; Evelyn M. Simpson, *A Study of the Prose Works of Donne,* 1924, rev. 1948; Theodore Spencer, T. S. Eliot and others, *A Garland for Donne,* 1932; J. B. Leishman, *The Monarch of Wit,* 1951, rev. 1962; K. W. Gransden, *John Donne,* 1954; Helen L. Gardner, ed., *John Donne: A Collection of Critical Essays,* 1962.

PERSONAL

He was of stature moderately tall; of a straight and equally-proportioned body, to which all his words and actions gave an unexpressible addition of comeliness. The melancholy and pleasant humour were in him so contempered, that each gave advantage to the other, and made his company one of the delights of mankind. His fancy was unimitably high, equalled only by his great wit; both being made useful by a commanding judgment. His aspect was cheerful, and such as gave a silent testimony of a clear knowing soul, and of a conscience at peace with itself. His melting eye shewed that he had a soft heart, full of noble compassion; of too brave a soul to offer injuries, and too much a Christian not to pardon them in others. . . . He was by nature highly passionate, but more apt to reluct at the excess of it. A great lover of the offices of humanity, and of so merciful a spirit, that he never beheld the miseries of mankind without pity and relief.

Izaak Walton, 1639, *The Life of Dr. John Donne*

Dr. Donne, once so celebrated as a writer, now so neglected, is more interesting for his matrimonial history, and for one little poem addressed to his wife, than for all his learned, metaphysical, and theological productions.

Anna Brownell Jameson, 1829, *The Loves of the Poets,* vol. II, p. 94

The knowledge of Donne's immense learning, the subtlety and capacity of his intellect, the intense depth and wide scope of his thought, the charm of his conversation, the sadness of his life, gave a vivid meaning and interest to his poems . . . circulated among his acquaintances, which at this distance of time we cannot reach without a certain effort of imagination. . . . Dr. Donne is one of the most interesting personalities among our men of letters. The superficial facts of his life are so incongruous as to be an irresistible provocation to inquiry. What are we to make of the fact that the founder of a licentious school of erotic poetry, a man acknowledged to be the greatest wit in a licentious Court, with an early bias in matters of religion towards Roman Catholicism, entered the Church of England when he was past middle age and is now numbered among its greatest divines? Was he a convert like St. Augustine, or an indifferent worldling like Talleyrand? Superficial appearances are rather in favour of the latter supposition.

William Minto, 1880, "John Donne," *The Nineteenth Century,* vol. 7, p. 849

His graceful person, vivacity of conversation, and many accomplishments secured for him the *entrée* at the houses of the nobility and a recognised position among the celebrities of Queen Elizabeth's court. He was conspicuous as a young man of fortune who spent his money freely, and mixed on equal terms with the courtiers, and probably had the character of being richer than he was. . . . The young man, among his other gifts, had the great advantage of being able to do with very little sleep. He could read all night and be gay and wakeful and alert all day. He threw himself into the amusements and frivolities of the court with all the glee of youth, but never so as to interfere with his duties. The favourite of fortune, he was too the favourite of the fortunate—the envy of some, he was the darling of more. Those of his contemporaries who knew him intimately speak of him at all times as if there was none like him; the charm of his person and manners were irresistible. He must have had much love to give, or he could never had so much bestowed upon him.

Augustus Jessopp, 1897, *John Donne, Sometime Dean of St. Paul's,* pp. 13, 18

History presents us with no instance of a man of letters more obviously led up to by the experience and character of his ancestors than was John Donne.

As we have him revealed to us, he is what a genealogist might wish him to be. Every salient feature in his mind and temperament is foreshadowed by the general trend of his family, or by the idiosyncrasy of some individual member of it. . . . The greatest preacher of his age. . . . No one, in the history of English literature, as it seems to me, is so difficult to realise, so impossible to measure, in the vast curves of his extraordinary and contradictory features. Of his life, of his experiences, of his opinions, we know more now than it has been vouchsafed to us to know of any other of the great Elizabethan and Jacobean galaxy of writers, and yet how little we fathom his contradictions, how little we can account for his impulses and his limitations. Even those of us who have for years made his least adventures the subject of close and eager investigation, must admit at last that he eludes us. He was not the crystal-hearted saint that Walton adored and exalted. He was not the crafty and redoubtable courtier whom the recusants suspected. He was not the prophet of the intricacies of fleshly feeling whom the young poets looked up to and worshipped. He was none of these, or all of these, or more. What was he? It is impossible to say, for, with all his superficial expansion, his secret died with him. We are tempted to declare that of all the great men he is the one of whom least is essentially known. Is not this, perhaps, the secret of his perennial fascination?

Edmund Gosse, 1899, *The Life and Letters of John Donne,* vol. I, pp. 3, 11, vol. II, p. 290

General

Donne, the delight of Phœbus and each Muse,
Who, to thy one, all other brains refuse;
Whose every work of thy most early wit
Came forth example, and remains so yet;
Longer a-knowing than most wits do live,
And which no affection praise enough can give!
To it, thy language, letters, arts, best life,
Which might with half mankind maintain a strife;
All which I meant to praise, and yet I would;
But leave, because I cannot as I should!

Ben Jonson, 1616, *To John Donne*

That Done's Anniversarie was profane and full of blasphemies: that he told Mr. Done, if it had been written of the Virgin Marie it had been something; to which he answered, that he described the Idea of a Woman, and not as she was. That Done, for not keeping of accent, deserved hanging. . . . He esteemeth John Done the first poet in the world in some things: his verses of the "Lost Chaine" he heth by heart; and that passage of the "Calme,"

That dust and feathers doe not stirr, all was so quiet. Affirmeth Done to have written all his best pieces ere he was 25 years old.

William Drummond, 1619, *Notes on Ben Jonson's Conversations*

Would not Donne's satires, which abound with so much wit, appear more charming, if he had taken care of his words, and of his numbers? But he followed Horace so very close, that of necessity he must fall with him; and I may safely say it of this present age, that if we are not so great wits as Donne, yet, certainly, we are better poets.

John Dryden, 1692, *Essay on Satire; Works,*
ed. Scott and Saintsbury, vol. XIII, p. 109

Since Dryden, the metre of our poets leads to the sense: in our elder and more genuine bards, the sense, including the passion, leads to the metre. Read even Donne's satires as he meant them to be read, and as the sense and passion demand, and you will find in the lines a manly harmony.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1818, *Notes on Beaumont and Fletcher,*
ed. Ashe, p. 427

Donne was the "best good-natured man, with the worst natured Muse." A romantic and uxorious lover, he addresses the object of his real tenderness with ideas that outrage decorum. He begins his own epithalamium with most indelicate invocation to his bride. His ruggedness and whim are almost proverbially known. Yet there is a beauty of thought which at intervals rises from his chaotic imagination, like the form of Venus smiling on the waters.

Thomas Campbell, 1819, *An Essay on English Poetry*

Donne is the most inharmonious of our versifiers, if he can be said to have deserved such a name by lines too rugged to seem metre. Of his earlier poems, many are very licentious; the later are chiefly devout. Few are good for much; the conceits have not even the merit of being intelligible: it would perhaps be difficult to select three passages that we should care to read again.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe,*
pt. iii, ch. v, par. 39

On a superficial inspection, Donne's verses look like so many riddles. They seem to be written upon the principle of making the meaning as difficult to be found out as possible,— of using all the resources of language, not to express thought, but to conceal it. Nothing is said in a direct, natural manner; conceit follows conceit without intermission; the most remote analogies,

the most far-fetched images, the most unexpected turns, one after another, surprise and often puzzle the understanding; while things of the most opposite kinds—the harsh and the harmonious, the graceful and the grotesque, the grave and the gay, the pious and the profane—meet and mingle in the strangest of dances. But, running through all this bewilderment, a deeper insight detects not only a vein of the most exhuberant wit, but often the sunniest and most delicate fancy, and the truest tenderness and depth of feeling.

George L. Craik, 1861, *A Compendious History of English Literature and of the English Language,* vol. I, p. 579

The central thought of Dr. Donne is nearly sure to be just: the subordinate thoughts by means of which he unfolds it are often grotesque, and so wildly associated as to remind one of the lawlessness of a dream, wherein mere suggestion without choice or fitness rules the sequence. As some of the writers of whom I have last spoken would play with words, Dr. Donne would sport with ideas, and with the visual images or embodiments of them. Certainly in his case much knowledge reveals itself in the association of his ideas, and great facility in the management and utterance of them. True likewise, he says nothing unrelated to the main idea of the poem; but not the less certainly does the whole resemble the speech of a child of active imagination, to whom judgment as to the character of his suggestions is impossible, his taste being equally gratified with a lovely image and a brilliant absurdity: a butterfly and a shining potsherd are to him similarly desirable. Whatever wild thing starts from the thicket of thought, all is worthy game to the hunting intellect of Dr. Donne, and is followed without question of tone, keeping, or harmony. In his play with words, Sir Philip Sidney kept good heed that even that should serve the end in view; in his play with ideas, Dr. John Donne, so far from serving the end, sometimes obscures it almost hopelessly: the hart escapes while he follows the squirrels and weasels and bats. It is not surprising that, their author being so inartistic with regard to their object, his verses themselves should be harsh and unmusical beyond the worst that one would imagine fit to be called verse. He enjoys the unenviable distinction of having no rival in ruggedness of metric movement and associated sounds. This is clearly the result of indifference; however, which grows very strange to us when we find that he *can* write a lovely verse and even an exquisite stanza.

George Macdonald, 1868, *England's Antiphon,* p. 114

After he had taken holy orders Donne seldom threw his passions into verse; even his *Divine Poems* are, with few exceptions, of early date; the poet in Donne did not cease to exist, but his ardour, his imagination, his delight in

what is strange and wonderful, his tenderness, his tears, his smiles, his erudition, his intellectual ingenuities, were all placed at the service of one whose desire was that he might die in the pulpit, or if not die, that he might take his death in the pulpit, a desire which was in fact fulfilled. . . . Donne as a poet is certainly difficult of access. . . . He sometimes wrote best, or thought he wrote best, when his themes were wholly of the imagination. Still it is evident that Donne, the student, the recluse, the speculator on recondite problems, was also a man who adventured in pursuit of violent delights which had violent ends. . . . In whatever sunny garden, and at whatever banquet Donne sits, he discerns in air the dark Scythesman of that great picture attributed to Orcagna. An entire section of his poetry is assigned to death.

Edward Dowden, 1895, *New Studies in Literature*, pp. 90, 91, 107, 117

As in the case of the pastoral fashion, there were other currents of lyrical production, less directed by the conventionalities of the moment. Spenser aside, whose elaborated state does not lend itself readily to the shorter lyric, and whose singing robes are stiff with tissue of gold, wrought work, and gems inlaid, and Shakespeare, also, whose non-dramatic Muse is dedicated to thoughtful sonnet and mournful threnody, as well as to the sprightlier melodies of love, wine, and merriment, the most important poetical influence of this decade is that of that grave and marvelous man, Dr. John Donne. I would respectfully invite the attention of those who still persist with Dr. Johnson in regarding this great poet as the founder of a certain "Metaphysical School of Poetry," a man all but contemporary with Cowley, and a writer harsh, obscure, and incomprehensible in his diction, first to an examination of facts which are within the reach of all, and, secondly, to an honest study of his works. . . . Just as Shakespeare touched life and man at all points, and, absorbing the light of his time, gave it forth a hundredfold, so Donne, withdrawn almost wholly from the influences affecting his contemporaries, shone and glowed with a strange light all his own. . . . It seems to me that no one, excepting Shakespeare, with Sidney, Greville, and Jonson in lesser measure, has done so much to develop intellectualized emotion in the Elizabethan lyric as John Donne.

Felix E. Schelling, 1895, *A Book of Elizabethan Lyrics*, pp. xxi, xxii, xxiii

There is hardly any, perhaps indeed there is not any, English author on whom it is so hard to keep the just mixture of personal appreciation and critical measure as it is on John Donne. It is almost necessary that those who do not like him should not like him at all; should be scarcely able to see how any decent and intelligent human creature can like him. It is almost

as necessary that those who do like him should either like him so much as to speak unadvisedly with their lips, or else curb and restrain the expression of their love for fear that it should seem on that side idolatry. But these are not the only dangers. Donne is eminently of that kind which lends itself to sham liking, to coterie worship, to a false enthusiasm; and here is another weapon in the hands of the infidels, and another stumbling-block for the feet of the true believers. . . . In Donne's case the yea-nay fashion of censorship which is necessary and desirable in the case of others is quite superfluous. His faults are so gross, so open, so palpable, that they hardly require the usual amount of critical comment and condemnation. But this very peculiarity of theirs constantly obscures his beauties even to not unfit readers. They open him; they are shocked, or bored, or irritated, or puzzled by his occasional nastiness (for he is now and then simply and inexcusably nasty), his frequent involution and eccentricity, his not quite rare indulgence in extravagances which go near to silliness; and so they lose the extraordinary beauties which lie beyond or among these faults.

George Saintsbury, 1896, *Poems of John Donne,*
Introduction, vol. I, pp. xi, xxxi, xxxii

THOMAS DEKKER

C. 1570-1632

Born in London about 1570. Sent by father to Merchants Tailors School; afterwards believed to have been apprenticed to tailor or shoemaker. Married by 1594; mentioned in Henslowe's Diary by 1597 as author of play "called *Fayeton*" (*Phaeton*); in prison for debt, 1598; again imprisoned for debt, 1613-19, during which he wrote devotional prayers and an autobiographical work, *Dekker His Dream.* In 1622 reappeared as playwright, as collaborator with Massinger of *The Virgin Martyr.* Last mention of Dekker in 1637 in the dedication by him to a pamphlet. Works: *Canaans Calamitie,* 1578; *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (anon.), 1600; *The Pleasant Comedie of Old Fortunatus* (anon.), 1600; *Satiromastix,* 1602; *The Wonderful Yeare,* 1603 (anon.), 1603; *The Batchelar's Banquet* (anon.), 1603; *Patient Grissil* (with Haughton and Chettle), 1603; *Magnificent Entertainment given to King James,* 1604; *The Honest Whore,* 1604; *The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London,* 1606; *Newes from Hell,* 1606; *The Double P. P.* (anon.), 1606; *A Knight's Conjuring,* 1607; *Westward Ho,* (with Webster), 1607; *Northward Ho* (with Webster), 1607; *The Whore of Babylon,* 1607; *The Famous History of Sir Thomas Wyat* (with Webster), 1607; *The Dead Tearme,* 1608; *The Belman of London* (anon.), 1608; *Lanthorne and Candlelight,* 1608 (2nd and 3rd edns., 1609; 4th, anon., entitled *O per se O,* 1612); *The Ravens* [*Raven's*] *Almanacke,* 1609; *The Guls Horne-booke,* 1609; *Work for Armourers,* 1609; *Fowre Birds of Noah's Arke,* 1609; *The Roaring Girle* (with Mid-

dleton), 1611; *If it be not good, etc.*, 1612; *Troia-Nova Triumphans*, 1612; *A Strange Horse Race*, 1613; *Villanies Discovered* (anon.), 1616; *Dekker His Dreame*, 1620; *Greevous Grones for the Poore* (anon.), 1621; *The Virgin Martyr* (with Massinger), 1622; *A Rod for Run-Awayes*, 1625; *Warres, Warres, Warres*, 1628; *Britannia's Honour*, 1628; *London's Temple*, 1629; *Second Part of The Honest Whore*, 1630; *Match Mee in London*, 1631; *The Wonder of a Kingdome*, 1636. POSTHUMOUS: *The Sun's Darling* (with Ford), 1656; *The Witch of Edmonton* (with Ford and Rowley), 1658. COLLECTED WORKS: *Dramatic Works, with memoir*, in 4 vols., 1873; *Non-Dramatic Works*, ed. by A. B. Grosart (5 vols.), 1884-86.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors*, p. 76

SEE: *Dramatic Works*, ed. Fredson Bowers, 1953-61, 4 v.; *The Plague Pamphlets*, ed. F. P. Wilson, 1925; Una Ellis-Fermor, in *The Jacobean Drama*, 1936.

PERSONAL

The little that is known of Dekker's history, independent of his quarrel with Jonson, is unfortunate. His talents were prolific, and not contemptible; but he was goaded on by want to hasty productions—acquainted with spunging-houses, and an inmate of the King's Bench prison.

Thomas Campbell, 1819, *Specimens of the British Poets*

He was a playwright of great celebrity some years before the death of Queen Elizabeth, and had written most of his pieces for companies with which Alleyn and Henslowe were connected. Like many of his class, he seems to have been a man of careless habits, as regarded his pecuniary affairs, living from hand to mouth, by turns affluent and needy, and supplying his pressing wants by the produce of his prolific pen.

John Payne Collier, 1841, ed., *Memoirs of Edward Alleyn*, p. 131

A man whose inborn sweetness and gleefulness of soul carried him through vexations and miseries which would have crushed a spirit less hopeful, cheerful, and humane. . . . Whatever may have been the effect of his vagabond habits on his principles, they did not stain the sweetness and purity of his sentiments. There is an innocency in his very coarseness, and a brisk, bright good-nature chirps in his very scurrility. In the midst of distresses of all kinds, he still seems, like his own Fortunatus, "all felicity up to the brims."

Edwin P. Whipple, 1859-68, *The Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*, p. 131, 132

More than ordinarily tantalizing and disappointing has been the outcome of prolonged and earnest search in all likely sources and by all likely helpers for light on the long-dimmed story of Thomas Dekker. It is no new experience to such Worker as myself in Elizabethan-Jacobean literary-biographical fields. None the less is it trying to find one who demonstrably was in many men's mouths, and was noticeably and continuously a popular writer, so utterly overlooked by those from whom loving memories might have been counted on: *e.g.*, associated intimately as he was with the Playwrights of his period, from Ben Jonson to Massinger and Ford, and George Wilkins, it seems inexplicable that not one of all their superabundant productions yields a single distinct personal reference.

Alexander B. Grosart, 1886, ed., *The Non-Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker,* Memorial Introduction, vol. V, p. ix

In despite of his rare occasional spurts or outbreaks of self-assertion or of satire, he seems to stand before us as a man of gentle, modest, shiftless and careless nature, irritable and placable, eager and unsteady, full of excitable kindliness and deficient in strenuous principle; loving the art which he professionally followed, and enjoying the work which he occasionally neglected.

Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1887, "Thomas Dekker," *The Nineteenth Century,* vol. 21, p. 102

The Honest Whore (1604-1630)

There is in the second part of this play, where Bellafront, a reclaimed harlot, recounts some of the miseries of her profession, a simple picture of honour and shame, contrasted without violence, and expressed without immodesty, which is worth all the *strong lines* against the harlot's profession, with which both parts of this play are offensively crowded.

Charles Lamb, 1808, *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare*

Old honest Decker's Signor Orlando Friscobaldo I shall never forget! I became only of late acquainted with this last-mentioned worthy character; but the bargain between us is, I trust, for life. We sometimes regret that we had not sooner met with characters like these, that seem to raise, revive, and give a new zest to our being. Vain the complaint! We should never have known their value, if we had not known them always: they are old, very old acquaintance, or we should not recognise them at first sight. We only find in books what is already written within "the red-leaved tables of our hearts."

William Hazlitt, 1920, *Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*

In this play, which to my mind has every mark of being essentially his, Dekker has treated with powerful simplicity the most terrible of the sins of a great city, and although I am by no means inclined to assign to *The Honest Whore,* from a literary point of view, the highest eminence among his dramatic works, the depth of its general conception and the broad effectiveness of its execution have justly caused this to be regarded as one of the most interesting productions of the popular Elisabethan drama. . . . Dekker's age, whatever its vices and weaknesses, had not lost the power of holding up to them a true uncompromising mirror; and it must be that in *The Honest Whore* the main lesson of the action is brought home not merely with the utmost directness of speech, but also with unmistakeable integrity of purpose.

Adolphus William Ward, 1875-99, *A History of English Dramatic Literature,* vol. II, p. 462

His sympathy with sinful and sorrowing humanity was genuine and deep; but his poignant feelings sometimes found expression in language which seems to have the air of insincerity. In the fine scenes where Hippolito implores Bellafront to abandon her vicious course of life, and again where he strives to undo the effect of his former teaching, one feels that the arguments and illustrations are enforced with over-heated vehemence. This note of exaggeration is never absent from Dekker's work; he let his fancy have full swing and did not write "with slower pen." But he was the most natural of writers, lovable at all points, full of simplicity and tenderness. The character of Orlando Friscobaldo is drawn in Dekker's cheeriest, sunniest manner. . . . Had Middleton's share in *The Honest Whore* been at all considerable, we may be tolerably sure that his name would not have been omitted from the title-page.

A. H. Bullen, 1885, ed., *The Works of Thomas Middleton,* Introduction, vol. I, p. xxv, xxvii

My own reason for preferring it to almost all the non-tragical work of the time out of Shakespere, is the wonderful character of Bellafront, both in her unreclaimed and her reclaimed condition. In both she is a very woman —not as conventional satirists and conventional encomiasts praise or rail at women, but as women are. If her language in her unregenerate days is sometimes coarser than is altogether pleasant, it does not disguise her nature,—the very nature of such a woman misled by giddiness, by curiosity, by love of pleasure, by love of admiration, but in no thorough sense depraved. Her selection of Matheo not as the instrument of her being "made an honest woman," not apparently because she had any love for him left, or had ever had much, but because he was her first seducer, is exactly what, after a sudden convincing of sin, such a woman would have done; and if

her patience under the long trial of her husband's thoughtlessness and occasional brutality seem excessive, it will only seem so to one who has been unlucky in his experience. Matheo indeed is a thorough good-for-nothing, and the natural man longs that Bellafront might have been better parted; but Dekker was a very moral person in his own way, and apparently he would not entirely let her—Imogen gone astray as she is—off her penance.

George Saintsbury, 1887, *History of Elizabethan Literature*, p. 205

General

Quick Anti-Horace.

Henry Chettle, 1603, *Englands Mourning Garment*

Why, sir, sayd I, there is a booke called *Greenes Ghost haunts Conycatchers*; another called *Legerdemaine*, and *The Blacke Dog of Newgate*; but the most wittiest, elegantest and eloquentest peece (Master Dekkers, the true heire of Appolo composed) called *The Bell-man of London*, have already set foorth the vices of the time so vively, that it is unpossible the Anchor of any other mans braine can sound the sea of a more deepe and dreadful mischeefe.

William Fennor, 1617, *The Compter's Commonwealth*

A high-flier in wit, even against Ben Jonson himself, in his Comedy called *The Untrussing of the Humourous Poet*.

Edward Phillips, 1675, *Theatrum Poetarum Anglicanorum*, ed. Brydges, p. 237

Upon the whole, Decker cannot be ranked with Chapman and Heywood, and it is very probable that he could not have been half so well respected as he was, had not the envy of Jonson, who had he possessed an atom of good sense would have smiled and passed by him, lifted him into a consequence, not only fancied by him but credited by the world.

Charles Dibdin, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage*, vol. III, p. 260

I take Webster and Decker to have been the two greatest of the Shakspeare men, for unstudied genius, next after Beaumont and Fletcher; and in some respects they surpassed them. Beaumont and Fletcher have no such terror as Webster, nor any such piece of hearty, good, affecting human clay as Decker's "Old Signior Orland Friscobaldo." Is there any such man even in Shakspeare?—any such exaltation of that most delightful of all things, *bonhomie?* Webster sometimes overdoes his terror; nay, often. He not only riots, he debauches in it; and Decker, full of heart and delicacy as he is, and

qualified to teach refinement to the refined, condescends to an astounding coarseness. Beaumont and Fletcher's good company saved them from that, in words. In spirit they are full of it. But Decker never mixes up (at least not as far as I can remember) any such revolting and impossible contradictions in the same character as they do. Neither does he bring a doubt of his virtues by exaggerating them. He believes heartily in what he does believe, and you love him in consequence.

Leigh Hunt, 1844, *Imagination and Fancy*, p. 197

When all deductions have been made on the score of inartistic and reckless workmanship, Dekker's best plays rank with the masterpieces of the Elizabethan drama; and his numerous tracts, apart from their sterling literary interest, are simply invaluable for the information that they afford concerning the social life of Elizabethan and Jacobean times.

A. H. Bullen, 1888, *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. XIV, p. 300

There is good meat in what Dekker wrote: he had humor; he had pluck; he had gift for using words—to sting or to praise—or to beguile one. There are traces not only of a Dickens flavor in him, but of a Lamb flavor as well; and there is reason to believe that, like both these later humorists, he made his conquests without the support of a university training. Swinburne characterizes him as a "modest, shiftless, careless nature": but he was keen to thrust a pin into one who had offended his sensibilities; in his plays he warmed into pretty lyrical outbreaks, but never seriously measured out a work of large proportions, or entered upon execution of such with a calm, persevering temper. He was many-sided, not only literary-wise, but also conscience-wise. It seems incredible that one who should write the coarse things which appear in his *Bachelor's Banquet* should also have elaborated, with a pious unction (that reminds of Jeremy Taylor) the saintly invocations of the *Foure Birds of Noah's Ark*: and as for his *Dreame* it shows in parts a luridness of color which reminds of our own Wigglesworth—as if this New England poet of fifty years later may have dipped his brush into the same paint-pot.

Donald G. Mitchell, 1889, *English Lands, Letters and Kings. From Celt to Tudor*, p. 287

A marked difference between Dekker and Nash resulted from the fact that Dekker had not only a love of poetry, but a poetical faculty of a high order. He went far beyond the picturesqueness of Nash's word-painting, and reached in his prose as well as in his verse true lyrical emotion and pathos; he had, said Lamb, "poetry enough for anything"; and while Nash's gaiety, true and hearty as it is, takes often and naturally a bitter satirical turn,

Dekker's gaiety though sometimes bitter, more usually takes a pretty, graceful, and fanciful turn. . . . Dekker did not write novels properly so called, but his prose works abound with scenes that seem detached from novels, and that were so well fitted for that kind of writing that we find them again in the works of professional novelists of his or of a later time.

J. J. Jusserand, 1890, *The English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare,* pp. 332, 335

GEORGE HERBERT
1593-1633

Born, at Montgomery Castle, 3 April 1593. At Westminster School, 1605(?)-09; King's Scholar, 5 May 1609. Matric. Trin. Coll., Camb., 18 Dec. 1609; B.A., 1613; M.A., 1616; Minor Fellow, 3 Oct. 1614; Major Fellow, 15 March 1616; Prelector in School of Rhetoric, 1618; Deputy Public Orator, 21 Oct. 1619; Public Orator, 18 Jan. 1619 to 1627. Contrib. to *Cambridge Elegies,* 1612, 1619. Prebend. of Layton Ecclesia, 1625. Married Jane Danvers, 5 March 1629. Rector of Fugglestone-with-Bemerton, Wilts, April 1630. Died, at Bemerton, 3 March 1633. Buried in Bemerton church. WORKS: *Parentalia,* 1627; *Oratio, qua . . . Principis Caroli Reditum ex Hispaniis celebravit Georgius Herbert,* 1623. POSTHUMOUS: *The Temple* (priv. ptd.; only one copy known), 1633 (two other edns., publicly ptd., same year); *Jacula Prudentum,* 1651 (originally pubd. in *Witt's Recreation,* 1640, as *Outlandish Proverbs*); *Herbert's Remains,* 1652; *Musæ Responsoriæ ad Andreæ Melvini Scoti Anti-Tami-Cami-Categoriam* (pubd. as appendix to Vivian's *Ecclesiastes Solomonis*), 1662. He *translated:* Cornaro's *Treatise of Temperance,* 1634; J. de Valdes' *Hundred and Ten Considerations,* 1638.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 132

SEE: *Works,* ed. F. E. Hutchinson, 1941; Rosemond Tuve, *A Reading of Herbert,* 1952; Joseph H. Summers, *George Herbert, His Religion and Art,* 1954.

PERSONAL

So pious his life, that, as he was a copy of primitive, he might be a pattern of Sanctity to posterity. To testifie his independency on all others, he never mentioned the name of Jesus Christ, but with this addition, "My Master." Next God the Word, he loved the Word of God; being heard often to protest, "That he would not part with one leaf thereof for the whole world."

Thomas Fuller, 1662, *The Worthies of England,* ed. Nichols, vol. II, p. 601

He was for his person of a stature inclining towards tallness; his body was very straight, and so far from being cumbered with too much flesh, that he was lean to an extremity. His aspect was cheerful, and his speech and motion did both declare him a gentleman; for they were all so meek and obliging, that they purchased love and respect from all that knew him. . . . Brought most of his parishioners, and many gentlemen in the neighbourhood, constantly to make a part of his congregation twice a day: and some of the meaner sort of his parish did so love and reverence Mr. Herbert, that they would let their plough rest when Mr. Herbert's Saint's-bell rung to prayers, that they might also offer their devotions to God with him; and would then return back to their plough. And his most holy life was such, that it begot such reverence to God, and to him, that they thought themselves the happier, when they carried Mr. Herbert's blessing back with them to their labour. Thus powerful was his reason and example to persuade others to a practical piety and devotion.

Isaac Walton, 1670, *The Life of Mr. George Herbert*

What was said of the late venerable Dr. John Brown, of Edinburgh, that "his face was a sermon for Christ," holds of the thought-lined, burdened-eyed, translucent as if transfigured face of Herbert. There is a noble "ivory palace" for the meek and holy soul there; brow steep rather than wide; lips tremulous as with music; nose pronounced as Richard Baxter's; cheeks worn and thin; hair full and flowing as in younger days: altogether a face which one could scarcely pass without note—all the more that there are lines in it which inevitably suggest that if George Herbert mellowed into the sweet lovingness and gentleness of John "whom Jesus loved," it was of grace, and through masterdom of a naturally lofty, fiery spirit. After all, these are the men of God who leave the deepest mark on their generation.

Alexander B. Grosart, 1873, "George Herbert," *Leisure Hour*, vol. 22, p. 455

The Temple (1633)

Sir, I pray deliver this little book to my dear brother Farrer, and tell him, he shall find in it a picture of the many spiritual conflicts that have passed betwixt God and my soul, before I could subject mine to the will of Jesus my Master: in whose service I have now found perfect freedom. Desire him to read it; and then, if he can think it may turn to the advantage of any dejected poor soul: let it be made public; if not let him burn it; for I and it are less than the least of God's mercies.

George Herbert, 1632, *To Mr. Duncon, Walton's Life of Herbert*

A book, in which by declaring his own spiritual conflicts, he hath comforted and raised many a dejected and discomposed soul, and charmed them into sweet and quiet thoughts: a book, by the frequent reading whereof, and the assistance of that Spirit that seemed to inspire the Author, the Reader may attain habits of Peace and Piety, and all the gifts of the Holy Ghost and Heaven: and may, by still reading, still keep those sacred fires burning upon the altar of so pure a heart, as shall free it from the anxieties of this world, and keep it fixed upon things that are above.

Isaac Walton, 1639, *Life of Dr. John Donne,* p. 97

His poetry is the *bizarre* expression of a deeply religious and intensely thoughtful nature, sincere at heart, but strange, farfetched, and serenely crotchety in utterance. Nothing can be more frigid than the conceits in which he clothes the great majority of his pious ejaculations and heavenly ecstasies. Yet every reader feels that his fancy, quaint as it often is, is a part of the organism of his character; and that his quaintness, his uncouth metaphors and comparisons, his squalid phraseology, his holy charades and pious riddles, his inspirations crystallized into ingenuities, and his general disposition to represent the divine through the exterior guise of the odd, are vitally connected with that essential beauty and sweetness of soul which give his poems their wild flavor and fragrance. Amateurs in sanctity, and men of fine religious taste, will tell you that genuine emotion can never find an outlet in such an elaborately fantastic form; and the proposition, according, as it does, with the rules of Blair and Kames and Whately, commands your immediate assent; but still you feel that genuine emotion is there, and, if you watch sharply, you will find that Taste, entering holy George Herbert's *Temple,* after a preliminary sniff of imbecile contempt, somehow slinks away unabashed after the first verse at the "Church-porch." . . . One of the profoundest utterances of the Elizabethan age, George Herbert's lines on Man.

Edwin P. Whipple, 1859-68, *The Literature of the Age of Elizabeth,* pp. 247, 248

The Temple is the enigmatical history of a difficult resignation; it is full of the author's baffled ambition and his distress, now at the want of a sphere for his energies, now at the fluctuations of spirit, the ebb and flow of intellectual activity, natural to a temperament as frail as it was eager. There is something a little feverish and disproportioned in his passionate heart-searchings. The facts of the case lie in a nutshell. Herbert was a younger son of a large family; he lost his father early, and his mother, a devout, tender, imperious woman, decided, partly out of piety and partly out of distrust of his power to make his own way in the world, that he should be provided for

in the Church. When he was twenty-six he was appointed Public Orator at Cambridge, and hoped to make this position a stepping-stone to employment at court. After eight years his patrons and his mother were dead, and he made up his mind to settle down with a wife on the living of Bemerton, where he died after a short but memorable incumbency of three years. The flower of his poetry seems to belong to the two years of acute crisis which preceded his installation at Bemerton or to the Indian summer of content when he imagined that his failure as a courtier was a prelude to his success in the higher character of a country parson.

George Augustus Simcox, 1880, *English Poets*, ed. Ward, vol. II, p. 193

General

The first, that with any effectual success attempted a diversion of this foul and overflowing stream, was the blessed man, Mr. George Herbert, whose holy life and verse gained many pious converts—of whom I am the least—and gave the first check to a most flourishing and admired wit of his time.

Henry Vaughan, 1650, *Silex Scintillans*, Preface

A writer of the same class, though infinitely inferior to both Quarles and Crashaw. His poetry is a compound of enthusiasm without sublimity, and conceit without either ingenuity or imagination. . . . When a man is once reduced to the impartial test of time,—when partiality, friendship, fashion, and party, have withdrawn their influence,—our surprise is frequently excited by past subjects of admiration that now cease to strike. He who takes up the poems of Herbert would little suspect that he had been public orator of an university, and a favourite of his sovereign; that he had received flattery and praise from Donne and from Bacon; and that the biographers of the day had enrolled his name among the first names of his country.

Henry Headley, 1787, *Select Beauties of Ancient English Poetry*

. . . we do not at all mean to claim for him such quality or quantity of genius as belongs to these "greatest"; nor indeed would we even put him on a level with Henry Vaughan the Silurist, or Richard Crashaw. But we do mean that his fame is as true and catholic, and covetable and imperishable, as that of any. We could as soon conceive of the skylark's singing dying out of our love, or the daisy of the "grene grasse" ceasing to be "a thing of beauty," as of the verse-Temple built fully two centuries and a half ago being now suffered to go to ruin or to take stain. Myriads treasure in their

heart of hearts the poems of George Herbert who know little and do not care to know more of the mighty sons of song.

Alexander B. Grosart, 1873, "George Herbert," *Leisure Hour,* vol. 22, p. 325

It may be confessed without shame and without innuendo that Herbert has been on the whole a greater favourite with readers than with critics, and the reason is obvious. He is not prodigal of the finest strokes of poetry. To take only his own contemporaries, and undoubtedly pupils, his gentle moralising and devotion are tame and cold beside the burning glow of Crashaw, commonplace and popular beside the intellectual subtlety and, now and then, the inspired touch of Vaughan. But he never drops into the flatness and the extravagance of both these writers, and his beauties, assuredly not mean in themselves, and very constantly present, are both in kind and in arrangement admirably suited to the average comprehension. He is quaint and conceited; but his quaintnesses and conceits are never beyond the reach of any tolerably intelligent understanding. He is devout, but his devotion does not transgress into the more fantastic regions of piety. He is a mystic, but of the more exoteric school of mysticism. Thus he is among sacred poets very much (though relatively he occupies a higher place) what the late Mr. Longfellow was among profane poets. He expresses common needs, common thoughts, the everyday emotions of the Christian, just sublimated sufficiently to make them attractive. The fashion and his own taste gave him a pleasing quaintness, which his good sense kept from being ever obscure or offensive or extravagant.

George Saintsbury, 1887, *History of Elizabethan Literature,* p. 372

JOHN WEBSTER

1570?-1634?

Little is known of his life. Born either as early as 1570, or as late as 1581. In Preface to *Monuments of Honour,* 1613, he wrote of himself that he was "born free of the Merchant Taylors' Company." Such a notation may mean that Webster's father belonged to the company rather than that Webster was a tailor. Webster said to have been a clerk of St. Andrew's, Holborn. He probably was an actor in his youth, and also studied at the Middle Temple in 1598 but was never called to the bar. Webster also believed to have studied at Cambridge University. First mention of Webster in 1602 when Henslowe recorded paying him, Anthony Munday, Thomas Middleton, Michael Drayton, "and the rest" for a play, *Caesar's Fall.* Webster collaborated on many plays, working at various periods with Middleton, Ford, Massinger, Heywood, and Marston, and wrote an intro-

duction to Marston's *Malcontents*. After 1626, when records of his collaborations ceased, Webster disappeared from historical notice. Thomas Heywood's poem, *Hierarchy of the Blessed Angels*, in 1634 spoke of Webster as dead. Facts of his death are unknown. WORKS (several lost): *The History of Sir Thomas Wyatt* (with Dekker), 1607; *Westward-Hoe* (with Dekker), 1607; *Northward-Hoe* (with Dekker), 1607; *The White Divel*, 1612; *A Monumental Columne erected to the living Memory of . . . Henry, late Prince of Wales*, 1613; *The Devil's Law-Case*, 1623; *The Tragedy of Dutchesse of Malfy*, 1623; *The Monument of Honour*, 1624; *Appius and Virginia*, 1654; *A Cure for a Cuckold* (with Rowley), 1661; *The Thracian Wonder* (with Rowley), 1661.

SEE: *Collected Works*, ed. A. Dyce, 1830, 1857, 4v.; *Works*, ed. F. L. Lucas, 1927, 4v.; Clifford Leech, *Webster*, 1951; Travis Bogard, *The Tragic Satire of John Webster*, 1955.

PERSONAL

Seldom has the biographer greater cause to lament a deficiency of materials than when engaged on the life of any of our early dramatists. Among that illustrious band John Webster occupies a distinguished place; and yet so scanty is our information concerning him, that in the present essay I can do little more than enumerate his different productions, and adduce proof that he was not the author of certain prose-pieces which have been attributed to him.

Alexander Dyce, 1830-57, ed. *The Works of John Webster*, p. ix

The abrupt withdrawal of Webster from writing for the stage—a step which he seems to have taken when he was little over thirty years of age—points to a sense of a want of harmony between his genius and the theatre. . . . If it were not absolutely certain that he flourished between 1602 and 1612, we should be inclined to place the period of his activity at least ten years earlier. Although in fact an exact contemporary of Beaumont and Fletcher, and evidently much Shakespeare's junior, a place between Marlowe and those dramatists seems appropriate to him, so primitive is his theatrical art, so ingenuous and inexperienced his notion of the stage. . . . Webster is an impressive rather than a dexterous playwright; but as a romantic poet of passion he takes a position in the very first rank of his contemporaries.

Edmund Gosse, 1894, *The Jacobean Poets*, pp. 172, 173

The White Devil (1612)

To those who report I was a long time in finishing this tragedy, I confesse I do not write with a goose-quill winged with two feathers; and, if they will needs make it my fault, I must answer them with that of Euripides to Al-

cestides, a tragick writer: Alcestides objecting that Euripides had onely in three daies composed three verses, whereas himself had written three hundredth; Thou telst truthe (quoth he), but heres the difference, thine shall onely be read for three daies, whereas mine shall continue three ages.

John Webster, 1612, *The White Devil,* Preface

I never saw anything like the funeral dirge in this play, for the death of Marcello, except the ditty which reminds Ferdinand of his drowned father in *The Tempest.* As that is of the water, watery; so this is of the earth, earthy. Both have that intenseness of feeling, which seems to resolve itself into the element which it contemplates.

Charles Lamb, 1808, *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare*

Although I cannot agree with those who regard this tragedy as the masterpiece of its author, it is beyond all doubt a most remarkable work. . . . The personages of this tragedy—above all that of the heroine—are conceived with the most striking original power and carried out with unerring consistency; but we crave—and crave in vain—some relief to the almost sickening combinations of awe and loathing created by such characters and motives as this drama presents.

Adolphus William Ward, 1875-99, *A History of English Dramatic Literature,* vol. III, pp. 56, 57

One of the most glorious works of the period. Vittoria is perfect throughout, and in the justly-lauded trial scene she has no superior on any stage. Brachiano is a thoroughly life-like portrait of the man who is completely besotted with an evil woman. Flamineo I have spoken of, and not favourably; yet in literature, if not in life, he is a triumph; and, above all, the absorbing tragic interest of the play, which it is impossible to take up without finishing, has to be counted in. But the real charm of *The White Devil* is the wholly miraculous poetry in phrases and short passages which it contains. Vittoria's dream of the yew-tree, almost all the speeches of the unfortunate Isabella, and most of her rival's, have this merit. But the most wonderful flashes of poetry are put in the mouth of the scoundrel Flamineo, where they have a singular effect.

George Saintsbury, 1887, *History of Elizabethan Literature,* p. 275

Webster's genius did not find full expression until he wholly freed himself from the trammels of partnership with men of powers inferior to his own. At an unascertained date between 1607 and 1612 he for the first time wrote a play singlehanded, and there evinced such command of tragic art and intensity as Shakespeare alone among Englishmen has surpassed.

Sidney Lee, 1899, *Dictionary of National Biography,* vol. LX, p. 121

Dutchesse of Malfy (1623)

> Crown him a poet, whom nor Rome nor Greece
> Transcend in all their's for a masterpiece;
> In which, whiles words and matter change, and men
> Act one another, he, from whose clear pen,
> They all took life, to memory hath lent
> A lasting fame to raise his monument.
>
> John Ford, 1623, *To the Reader of the Author, and His "Duchess of Malfi"*

All the several parts of the dreadful apparatus with which the death of the Duchess is ushered in, the waxen images which counterfeit death, the wild masque of madmen, the tombmaker, the bellman, the living person's dirge, the mortification by degrees, are not more remote from the conceptions of ordinary vengeance, than the strange character of suffering which they seem to bring upon their victim is out of the imagination of ordinary poets. As they are not like inflictions of this life, so her language seems not of this world. She has lived among horrors till she is become "native and endowed unto that element." She speaks the dialect of despair; her tongue has a smatch of Tartarus and the souls in bale. To move a horror skilfully, to touch a soul to the quick, to lay upon fear as much as it can bear, to wean and weary a life till it is ready to drop, and then step in with mortal instruments to take its last forfeit: this only a Webster can do. Inferior geniuses may "upon horror's head horrors accumulate" but they cannot do this. They mistake quantity for quality; they "terrify babes with painted devils;" but they know not how a soul is to be moved. Their terrors want dignity, their affrightments are without decorum.

Charles Lamb, 1808, *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare*

The Duchess of Malfi is certainly in a pure and loftier strain; but in spite of the praise which has been lavished on her, we must take the liberty to doubt whether the poor Duchess is "a person" at all. General goodness and beauty, intense though pure affection for a man below her in rank, and a will to carry out her purpose at all hazards, are not enough to distinguish her from thousands of other women; but Webster has no such purpose. What he was thinking and writing of was, not truth, but effect; not the Duchess, but her story; not her brothers, but their rage; not Antonio, her major-domo and husband, but his good and bad fortunes; and thus he has made Antonio merely insipid, the brother merely unnatural, and the Duchess (in the critical moment of the play) merely forward. That curious scene, in which she acquaints Antonio with her love for him,

and makes him marry her, is, on the whole, painful. Webster himself seems to have felt that it was so; and, dreading lest he had gone too far, to have tried to redeem the Duchess at the end by making her break down in two exquisite lines of loving shame: but he has utterly forgotten to explain or justify her love, by giving to Antonio, (as Shakespeare would probably have done,) such strong specialties of character as would compel, and therefore excuse his mistress's affection. He has plenty of time to do this in the first scenes,—time which he wastes on irrelevant matter; and all that we gather from them is that Antonio is a worthy and thoughtful person. If he gives promise of being more, he utterly disappoints that promise afterwards. In the scene in which the Duchess tells her love, he is far smaller, rather than greater than the Antonio of the opening scene, though (as there) altogether passive. He hears his mistress's declaration, just as any other respectable youth might; is exceedingly astonished, and a good deal frightened; has to be talked out of his fears till one naturally expects a revulsion on the Duchess's part into something like scorn or shame, (which might have given a good opportunity for calling out sudden strength in Antonio:) but so busy is Webster with his business of drawing mere blind love, that he leaves Antonio to be a mere puppet, whose worthiness we are to believe in only from the Duchess's assurance to him that he is perfection of all that man should be; which, as all lovers are of the same opinion the day before the wedding, is not of much importance.

Charles Kingsley, 1859, "Plays and Puritans," *Sir Walter Raleigh and His Time,* p. 102

Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* teaches both the triumphs and the dangers of the dramatic fury. The construction runs riot; certain characters are powerfully conceived, others are wild figments of the brain. It is full of most fantastic speech and action; yet the tragedy, the passion, the felicitous language and imagery of various scenes, are nothing less than Shakespearean. To comprehend rightly the good and bad qualities of this play is to have gained a liberal education in poetic criticism.

Edmund Clarence Stedman, 1892, *The Nature and Elements of Poetry,* p. 249

Webster's masterpiece is *The Duchess of Malfy,* of which it may confidently be alleged that it is the finest tragedy in the English language outside the works of Shakespeare. . . . It is curious that in a writer so distinguished by care in the working out of detail, we should find so lax a metrical system as marks *The Duchess of Malfy*. Here, again, Webster seems to be content to leave the general surface dull, while burnishing his own favourite passages to a high lustre. . . . The horrible dumb shows of *The Duchess of Malfy*—the strangled children, the chorus of maniacs, the murder of Cari-

ola, as she bites and scratches, the scuffling and stabbing in the fifth act, are, it appears to me—with all deference to the eminent critics, who have applauded them—blots on what is notwithstanding a truly noble poem, and what, with more reserve in this respect, would have been one of the first tragedies of the world.

Edmund Gosse, 1894, *The Jacobean Poets,* pp. 166, 167, 169

Was first printed in the memorable year which witnessed the first publication of his collected plays. This tragedy stands out among its compeers as one of the imperishable and ineradicable landmarks of literature. All the great qualities apparent in *The White Devil* reappear in *The Duchess of Malfy,* combined with a yet more consummate skill. No poet has ever so long and so successfully sustained at their utmost heighth and intensity the expressed emotions and the united effects of terror and pity. The transcendent imagination and the impassioned sympathy which inspire this most tragic of all tragedies save *King Lear* are fused together in the fourth act into a creation which has hardly been excelled for unflagging energy of impression and of pathos in all the dramatic or poetic literature of the world.

Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1894, *Studies in Prose and Poetry,* p. 51

The Devil's Law-Case (1632)

Despite fine passages, a mere "salmagundi."

George Saintsbury, 1887, *History of Elizabethan Literature,* p. 274

If the playwright took a step forwards in his Roman play, he took several backwards in his incoherent tragi-comedy of *The Devil's Law-Case.* Here no charm attaches to the characters; the plot moves around no central interest; the structure of the piece, from a stage point of view, is utterly at fault. None the less, this strange play will always have its readers, for Webster's literary faculty is nowhere exhibited to greater perfection, and the poetry of the text abounds in verbal felicities.

Edmund Gosse, 1894, *The Jacobean Poets,* p. 171

Appius and Virginia (1654)

In *Appius and Virginia,* printed in 1654, probably after its author's death, we may consider ourselves justified in recognising a work of his later manhood, if not of his old age. The theme is indeed one which might readily be supposed to have commended itself to Webster's love of the terrible; but he has treated it without adding fresh effects of his own invention to

those which he found ready to his hand. Yet the play has genuine power; and were it not that the action seems to continue too long after the death of Virginia, this tragedy might be described as one of the most commendable efforts of its class. The evenness, however, of its execution, and the absence (except in the central situation) of any passages of a peculiarly striking or startling character, exclude *Appius and Virginia* from the brief list of Webster's most characteristic productions.

Adolphus William Ward, 1875-99, *A History of English Dramatic Literature,* vol. III, p. 62

While the romantic and literary glow of language is severely restrained, there is here a very noticeable advance in every species of dramatic propriety, and *Appius and Virginia* is by far the best constructed of Webster's plays. . . . The scenes are largely set, the characters, especially those of Virginius and of Appius, justly designed and well contrasted, while the stiffness of Roman manners, as seen through a Jacobean medium, is not in this case sufficient to destroy the suppleness of the movement nor the pathos of the situation. *Appius and Virginia,* as a poem, will never possess the attractiveness of the two great Italian romances, but it is the best-executed of Webster's dramas.

Edmund Gosse, 1894, *The Jacobean Poets,* pp. 170, 171

A work which would alone have sufficed to perpetuate the memory of its author among all competent lovers of English poetry at its best.

Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1894, *Studies in Prose and Poetry,* p. 51

Appius and Virginia differs largely from the other plays in diction and figure. It is more rhetorical and declamatory, it contains fewer striking and original similitudes; and with a sort of dramatic propriety its language is more latinized and conventional. The attempt is obviously in another vein than the Italianate tragedies of *The White Devil* and *The Duchess* of *Malfi.*

Frederic Ives Carpenter, 1895, *Metaphor and Simile in the Minor Elizabethan Drama,* p. 80

General

An Author that liv'd in the Reign of King *James* the First; and was in those Days accounted an Excellent Poet. He joyn'd with *Decker, Marston,* and *Rowley,* in several Plays; and was likewise Author of others, which have even in our Age gain'd Applause. . . . Mr. *Philips* has committed a great Mistake, in ascribing several Plays to our Author, and his Associate

Mr. *Decker;* One of which belong to another Writer, whose Name is annexed, and the rest are Anonymous.

Gerard Langbaine, 1691, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets,* pp. 508, 510

His *White Devil* and *Dutchess of Malfi,* upon the whole, perhaps, come the nearest to Shakspeare of any thing we have upon record: the only drawback to them, the only shade of imputation that can be thrown upon them, "by which they lose some colour," is, that they are too like Shakspeare, and often direct imitations of him, both in general conception and individual expression.

William Hazlitt, 1820, *Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth,* Lecture III

Westward Ho and *Northward Ho* . . . are full of life and bustle, and remarkable for the light they throw on the manners and customs of the time. Though by no means pure, they are comparatively little stained by that grossness from which none of our old comedies are entirely free. In them the worst things are always called the worst names: the licentious and the debauched always speak most strictly in character; and the rake, the bawd, and the courtezan, are odious in representation as they would be if actually present.

Alexander Dyce, 1830-57, ed. *The Works of John Webster,* p. xiii

Webster was formed upon Shakspere. He had no pretensions to the inexhaustible wit, the all-penetrating humour, of his master; but he had the power of approaching the terrible energy of his passion, and the profoundness of his pathos, in characters which he took out of the great muster-roll of humanity and placed in fearful situations and sometimes with revolting imaginings almost beyond humanity. . . . It is clear what dramatic writers were the object of Webster's love. He did not aspire to the "full and heightened style of Master Chapman," nor would his genius be shackled by the examples of "the laboured and understanding works of Master Jonson." He belonged to the school of the romantic dramatists.

Charles Knight, 1842-67, *William Shakspere: A Biography*

Webster was one of those writers whose genius consists in the expression of special moods, and who, outside of those moods, cannot force their creative faculties into vigorous action. His mind by instinctive sentiment was directed to the contemplation of the darker aspects of life. He brooded over crime and misery until his imagination was enveloped in their atmosphere, found a fearful joy in probing their sources and tracing their consequences,

became strangely familiar with their physiognomy and psychology, and felt a shuddering sympathy with their "deep groans and terrible ghastly looks." There was hardly a remote corner of the soul, which hid a feeling capable of giving mental pain, into which this artist in agony had not curiously peered. . . . He is such a spendthrift of his stimulants, and accumulates horror on horror, and crime on crime, with such fatal facility, that he would render the mind callous to his terrors, were it not that what is acted is still less than what is suggested, and that the souls of his characters are greater than their sufferings or more terrible than their deeds. The crimes and the criminals belong to Italy as it was in the sixteenth century, when poisoning and assassination were almost the fashion; the feelings with which they are regarded are English; and the result of the combination is to make the poisoners and assassins more fiendishly malignant in spirit than they actually were.

Edwin P. Whipple, 1859-68, *The Literature of the Age of Elizabeth,* pp. 139, 141

John Webster, one of Shakspere's dramatic disciples, delighted in nothing so much as in full-length studies of tragic female figures. There are indeed wonderful creations in his plays beside these—sinister and cynical faces of men apparent in the gloom. But in his greatest dramas all exists for the sake of the one woman after whom each drama is named—the Duchess of Malfi, Webster's lady of sorrow, and his White Devil, Vittoria Corombona, on whom, splendid in her crime, he turns a high light of imagination that dazzles while we gaze.

Edward Dowden, 1887, *Transcripts and Studies,* p. 341

This poet's morbid imagination affects us like that touch of the dead man's hand in one of the hideous scenes of his own most famous play.

William Watson, 1893, *Excursions in Criticism,* p. 13

Nothing so much as a close and careful study of his imagery can bring home to one the extraordinary originality and power of Webster in his particular sphere. Webster worked consciously, deliberately, and with a thorough command of his materials. His pages are strewn with tropes, and, in spite of their profusion, such is the keenness of his marvelous "analogical instinct" and the dramatic force of his imagination that scarcely ever do they seem forced or out of keeping. Language here seems to reach the extreme of ruthless and biting intensity. There is scarcely any faded imagery, and there are very few conventional tags; everything stands out in sharp lines, as if etched. The characteristic fault of Webster's imagery, the defect of his peculiar quality, is that he errs if anything on the side of the bizarre, or even of the grotesque. This criticism could be enforced by many citations. . . .

The acrid nature of Webster's genius is everywhere felt in his pungent use of similitudes. The sardonic character of Flamineo in *The White Devil* is heightened by the irony of his incessant similes. So in *The Duchess of Malfi* Antonio's rather colorless virtues are artfully depicted through his fondness for sententious comparisons.

Frederic Ives Carpenter, 1895, *Metaphor and Simile in the Minor Elizabethan Drama,* pp. 75, 77

GEORGE CHAPMAN
1559(?)-1634

Born, near Hitchin, 1559(?). Educated at Trinity College, Oxford(?). First poems printed, 1594. First part of Homer translation pub., 1598. Prolific writer for stage. Died, in London, 12 May 1634. Buried in churchyard of St. Giles-in-the-Fields. WORKS: Σκια Νυκτος (under initials: G. W. Gent.), 1594; *Ovid's Banquet of Sence* (anon.), 1595; Completion of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander,* 1598; *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria,* 1598; *Seaven Bookes of the Iliades of Homere,* translated, 1598; *Achilles' Shield,* translated, 1598; *An Humorous Dayes Mirth* (under initials: G. C.), 1599; *Eastward Hoe* (with Jonson and Marston), 1605; *All Fools,* 1605; *The Gentleman Usher,* 1606; *Monsieur d'Olive,* 1606; *Sir Gyles Goosecappe* (anon.), 1606 (performed 1601); *Bussy d'Ambois* (anon.), 1607; *The Tragedie of Cæsar and Pompey* (anon.), 1607; *The Conspiracie and Tragedie of Charles, Duke of Byron,* 1608 (performed 1605); *Euthymiæ Raptus,* 1609; *The Iliades of Homer* (complete), 1611; *May Day,* 1611; *The Widowes Teares* ("by Geor. Chap."), 1612; Translation of Petrarch's *Seven Penitentiall Psalms,* 1612; *An Epicede* (anon.), 1612; *The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois,* 1613; *Memorable Masque,* 1614; *Eugenia,* 1614; *Andromeda Liberata,* 1614; *Twenty Four Bookes of Homere's Odisses translated,* 1614; *Iliad* and *Odyssey* translations together, 1616; *Divine Poems* of Musæus translated, 1617; Hesiod's *Georgicks* translated, 1618; *Two Wise Men* (anon.), 1619; *Pro Vere Autumni Lachrymæ,* 1622; *A Justification of a Strange Action of Nero,* 1629; *Homer's Batrachomyomachia* translated, 1624; *The Warres of Pompey and Cæsar* (anon.), 1631. POSTHUMOUS: *The Ball* (with Shirley), 1639 (acted 1632); *The Tragedy of Chabot* (with Shirley), 1639 (acted 1635); *The Tragedy of Alphonsus, Emperor of Germany,* 1654; *Revenge for Honour,* 1654. He contributed verses to: Jones's *Nennio,* 1595; Jonson's *Sejanus,* 1605, and *Volpone,* 1606; Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdesse,* 1610(?); *Parthenia,* 1611; Field's *A Woman is a Weathercock,* 1612. COLLECTED WORKS: in 3 vols., 1874-75.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 52

SEE: *Works,* ed. R. H. Shepherd, 1874-75, 3 v.; *Plays and Poems,* ed. Thomas Marc Parrott, 1910-14, 2 v. (Vol. III, *The Poems,* was not published); *Poems,* ed. Phyllis B. Bartlett, 1941; *Chapman's Homer,* ed. Allardyce Nicoll, 1956, 2 v.; Ennis Rees, *The Tragedies of George Chapman: Renaissance Ethics in Action,* 1954.

Personal

Not the meanest of the English poets of his time; who dying the 12th of May 1634, aged 77 years, was buried in the yard on the south side of the Church of S. Giles's in the Fields near London. Over his grave, near to the south wall of the church, was soon after a monument erected, built after the way of the old Romans, by the care and charge of his beloved friend Inigo Jones the King's Archatect; whereon is engraven this, *Georgius Chapmannus Poeta Homericus, Philosophus verus (etsi Christianus Poeta) plusquam celebris,* &c.

Anthony Wood, 1691-1721, *Athenæ Oxonienses*

In Chapman scholarship appears to have exerted its best traditional influences, instead of its wine being turned to vinegar by any infusion of vanity or jealousy. He seems to have been esteemed by patrons of the highest rank and eminence—Bacon was one of their number—and to have enjoyed in an exceptional degree the good-will of his fellow-poets. Jonson "loved" Chapman, knew a piece of his *Iliads* by heart, and averred that, next himself, "only Fletcher and Chapman could make a masque." Marston and Shirley were associated with him as playwrights. Webster speaks of him with what may be described as an excess of enthusiasm; for he seems to place him at the head of contemporary dramatists. This general esteem, in which the younger growth of lovers of letters seems to have shared, was probably due to the dignity of Chapman's character as well as to the reputation which his learning and talents had secured him.

Adolphus William Ward, 1875-99, *A History of English Dramatic Literature,* vol. II, p. 413

Hero and Leander (1598)

In Chapman's continuation, as in everything that Chapman wrote, there are fine passages in abundance; but the reader is wearied by tedious digressions, dull moralising, and violent conceits. There are couplets in the "Tale of Teras" (Fifth Sestiad) that for purity of colour and perfection of form are hardly excelled by anything in the first two sestiads; such passages, however, are few.

A. H. Bullen, 1884, ed. *The Works of Christopher Marlowe,* Introduction vol. I, p. lii

Marlowe died before he had completed the poem; it was finished by George Chapman, and no stronger proof of the greatness of Marlowe's genius can be furnished than the contrast between the work of the two men. Chapman

did not write without inspiration; but whereas Marlowe's style . . . is all flame, his successor's, even in his most brilliant moments, is half smoke.

W. J. Courthope, 1897, *A History of English Poetry,* vol. II, p. 327

Translation of Homer (1598-1616)

I must confess that, to mine own ear, these continual cadences of couplets used in long continued poems are very tiresome and unpleasing, by reason that still methinks they run on with a sound of one nature, and a kind of certainty which stuffs the delight rather than entertains it. But yet, notwithstanding, I must not of my own daintiness condemn this kind of writing, which peradventure to another may seem most delightful; and many worthy compositions we see to have passed with commendation in that kind. Besides methinks sometimes to beguile the ear with a running out and passing over the rhyme, as no bound to stay as in the line where the violence of the matter will break through, is rather graceful than otherwise. Wherein I find my Homer-Lucan, as if he gloried to seem to have no bounds albeit he were confined within his measures, to be in my conceit most happy; for so thereby they who care not for verse or rhyme may pass it over without taking any notice thereof, and please themselves with a well-measured prose.

Samuel Daniel, 1603, *A Defence of Rhyme*

That which is to be allowed him, and which very much contributed to cover his defects, is a daring fiery spirit that animates his translation, which is something like what one might imagine Homer himself would have writ before he arrived at years of discretion.

Alexander Pope, 1715-20, *The Iliad of Homer,* Preface

He has by no means represented the dignity or the simplicity of Homer. He is sometimes paraphrastic and redundant, but more frequently retrenches or impoverishes what he could not feel and express. In the meantime, he labours with the inconvenience of an aukward, inharmonious, and unheroic measure, imposed by custom, but disgustful to modern ears. Yet he is not always without strength or spirit. He has enriched our languages with many compound epithets, so much in the manner of Homer, such as the *silver-footed* Thetis, the *silver-throned* Juno, the *triple-feathered* helme, the *high-walled* Thebes, the *faire-haired* boy, the *silver-flowing* floods, the *hugely-peopled* towns, the Grecians *navy-bound,* the *strong-winged* lance, and many more which might be collected. Dryden reports, that Waller never could read Chapman's Homer without a degree of transport. Pope is of opinion, that Chapman covers his defects "by a daring fiery spirit that

animates his translation, which is something like what one might imagine Homer himself to have writ before he arrived to years of discretion." But his fire is too frequently darkened, by that sort of fustian which now disfigured the diction of our tragedy.

Thomas Warton, 1778-81, *History of English Poetry*, sec. lix

Chapman I have sent in order that you might read *The Odyssey; The Iliad* is fine, but less equal in the translation, as well as less interesting in itself. What is stupidly said of Shakspeare is really true and appropriate of Chapman: "mighty faults counterpoised by mighty beauties." . . . It is as truly an original poem as *The Faery Queen*;—it will give you small idea of Homer, though a far truer one than Pope's epigrams, or Cowper's cumbersome most anti-Homeric Miltonism. For Chapman writes and feels as a poet,—as Homer might have written had he lived in England in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. In short, it is an exquisite poem, in spite of its frequent and perverse quaintnesses and harshnesses, which are, however, amply repaid by almost unexampled sweetness and beauty of language, all over spirit and feeling.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1807, *Letter to Wordsworth(?), Coleridge's Literary Remains*

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

John Keats, 1816, *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*

Between Chapman and Homer there is interposed the mist of the fancifulness of the Elizabethan age, entirely alien to the plain directness of Homer's thought and feeling. . . . Chapman's style is not artificial and literary like Pope's, nor his movement elaborate and self-retarding like the Miltonic

movement of Cowper. He is plain-spoken, fresh, vigorous, and to a certain degree, rapid; and all these are Homeric qualities. I cannot say that I think the movement of his fourteen-syllable line, which has been so much commended, Homeric. . . . But as eminently as Homer is plain, so eminently is the Elizabethan literature in general, and Chapman in particular, fanciful. . . . Homer expresses himself like a man of adult reason, Chapman like a man whose reason has not yet cleared itself. . . . The Elizabethan poet fails to render Homer because he cannot forbear to interpose a play of thought between his object and its expression.

Matthew Arnold, 1861, *Lectures on Homer,* pp. 11, 22, 24, 25, 29

The more he admired Homer, the more Chapman felt bound to dress him up in the height of rhetorical conceit. He excused himself by the argument, that we have not the epics as Homer imagined them, that "the books were not set together by Homer." He probably imagined that, if Homer had had his own way with his own works, he would have produced something much more in the Chapman manner, and he kindly added, ever and anon, a turn which he fancied Homer would approve. The English reader must be on his guard against this custom of Chapman's, and must remember, too, that the translator's erudition was exceedingly fantastic. . . . Chapman has another great fault, allied indeed to a great excellence. In his speed, in the rapidity of the movement of his lines, he is Homeric. The last twelve books of *The Iliad* were struck out at a white heat, in fifteen weeks. Chapman was carried away by the current of the Homeric verse, and this is his great saving merit. Homer inspires him, however uncouth his utterance, as Apollo inspired the Pythoness.

Andrew Lang, 1880, *English Poets,* ed. Ward, vol. I, pp. 514, 515

Chapman's Homer is one of the great achievements of the Elizabethan age, a monument of skill and devotion. The mistranslations are many and grievous, and it is clear that Chapman's knowledge of Greek was not profound; but through the whole work there breathes a spirit of sleepless energy that amply atones for all crudities and conceits.

A. H. Bullen, 1887, *Dictionary of National Biography,* vol. X, p. 49

His version, with all its faults, outlived the popularity even of Pope, was for more than two centuries the resort of all who, unable to read Greek, wishes to know what the Greek was, and, despite the finical scholarship of the present day, is likely to survive all the attempts made with us. I speak with all humility, but as having learnt Homer from Homer himself, and not from any translation, prose or verse. I am perfectly aware of Chapman's outrageous liberties, of his occasional unfaithfulness (for a libertine need

not necessarily be unfaithful in translation), and of the condescension to his own fancies and the fancies of his age, which obscures not more perhaps than some condescensions which nearness and contemporary influences prevent some of us from seeing the character of the original. But at the same time, either I have no skill in criticism, and have been reading Greek for thirty years to none effect, or Chapman is far nearer Homer than any modern translator in any modern language.

George Saintsbury, 1887, *History of Elizabethan Literature,* pp. 185, 189

General

Detraction is the sworne friend to ignorance: For mine owne part I have ever truly cherisht my good opinion of other mens worthy Labours, especially of that full and haightned stile of maister *Chapman.*

John Webster, 1612, *The White Divel,* Dedication

A dwarfish thought [*Bussy d'Ambois*], dressed up in gigantic words, repetition in abundance, looseness of expression, and gross hyperboles; the sense of one line expanded prodigiously into ten; and, to sum up all, uncorrect English, and a hideous mingle of false poetry and true nonsense.

John Dryden, 1681, *The Spanish Friar,* Dedicatory Epistle; *Dryden's Works,* ed. Scott and Saintsbury, vol. VI, p. 404

Of all the English play-writers, perhaps approaches nearest to Shakespeare in the descriptive and didactic, in passages which are less purely dramatic. Dramatic imitation was not his talent. He could not go out of himself, as Shakespeare could shift at pleasure, to inform and animate other existences, but in himself he had an eye to perceive and a soul to embrace all forms and modes of being.

Charles Lamb, 1808, *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare*

His diction is chiefly marked by barbarous ruggedness, false elevation, and extravagant metaphor. The drama owes him very little; his *Bussy D'Ambois* is a piece of frigid atrocity, and in the *Widow's Tears,* where his heroine Cynthia falls in love with a sentinel guarding the corpse of her husband, whom she was bitterly lamenting, he has dramatized one of the most puerile and disgusting legends ever fabricated for the disparagement of female constancy.

Thomas Campbell, 1819, *Specimens of the British Poets*

Although destitute of a knowledge of dramatic effect neither in the tragic nor in the comic branch of the playwright's art, it would almost seem as if

Chapman had lacked the power, when working alone, of fully developing a character by means of dramatic action; certainly none of the comedies or tragedies written by him alone are as stage-plays comparable to *Eastward Hoe* and *Chabot* respectively. But though falling short of this power, he is happy in the invention of character in both tragedy and comedy,—in the latter more particularly, as his Monsieur d'Olive would alone suffice to prove. . . . The strength of Chapman lies in particular passages rather than in his plays as a whole. . . . Like Shakspere, he is able at times to reveal by these sudden flashes of poetic power depths of true feeling as well as of true wisdom. His observation is strikingly original as well as apt, and there is often something proverbial or gnomic about these passages, in which the physical as well as the moral world is called into play, and of which (if there be any profit in anthologies) it would be well worth while to attempt a complete list.

Adolphus William Ward, 1875-99, *A History of English Dramatic Literature,* vol. II, pp. 447, 448

Few writers were more culpably Alexandrian than George Chapman. The spirit of Callimachus or of Lycophron seems at times to have come upon him, as the *lutin* was supposed to whisper ideas extraordinarily good or evil, to Corneille. When under the influence of this possession, Chapman displayed the very qualities and unconsciously translated the language of Callimachus. He vowed that he detested popularity, and all that can please "the commune reader." He inveighed against the "invidious detractor" who became a spectre that dogged him in every enterprise. He hid his meaning in a mist of verbiage, within a labyrinth of conceits, and himself said, only too truly, about the "sweet Leander" of Marlowe,

"I in floods of ink
Must drown thy graces."

It is scarcely necessary to justify these remarks by illustrations from Chapman's works. Every reader of the poems and the prefaces finds barbarism, churlish temper, and pedantry in profusion. In spite of unpopularity, Chapman "rested as resolute as Seneca, satisfying himself if but a few, if one, or if none like" his verses. Why then is Chapman, as it were in his own despite, a poet still worthy of the regard of lovers of poetry? The answer is partly to be found in his courageous and ardent spirit, a spirit bitterly at odds with life, but still true to its nobility, still capable, in happier moments, of divining life's real significance, and of asserting lofty truths in pregnant words. In his poems we find him moving from an exaggerated pessimism, a pessimism worthy of a Romanticist of 1830, to more dignified acquiescence in human destiny.

Andrew Lang, 1880, *English Poets,* ed. Ward, vol. I, p. 510

JOHN MARSTON
1575(?)-1634

John Marston, 1575(?)-1634. Born, at Coventry(?), 1575(?). Matric. Brasenose Coll., Oxford, 4 Feb. 1592; B.A., 6 Feb. 1594. Wrote plays, 1599-1607. Ordained Rector of Christ-church, Hampshire, Oct. 1616 to Sept. 1631. Married Mary Wilkes. Died, in London, 25 June 1634; buried in Temple Church. WORKS: *The Metamorphosis of Pygmalion's Image* (under initials: W. K.), 1598; *The Scourge of Vilanie* (under pseud.: W. Kinsayder), 1598; *The History of Antonio and Mellida* (under initials: J. M.), 1602; *Antonio's Revenge*, 1602; *The Malcontent*, 1604; *Eastward Hoe* (with Jonson and Chapman), 1605; *The Dutch Courtezan*, 1605; *Parasitaster*, 1606; *The Wonder of Women*, 1606; *What You Will*, 1607; *Histriomastix* (anon.; probably partly by Marston), 1610; *The Insatiate Countess*, 1613; *Jack Drum's Entertainment* (anon.; probably by Marston), 1616; *Tragedies and Comedies* (anon.), 1633 (another edn., with his name, same year). COLLECTED WORKS: ed. by J. O. Halliwell (3 vols.), 1856; by A. H. Bullen (3 vols.), 1887.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors*, p. 186

SEE: *Plays*, ed. A. H. Bullen, 1887, 3v.; *Poems*, ed. Arnold Davenport, 1961; Anthony Caputi, *John Marston, Satirist*, 1961.

PERSONAL

Mr. Henslowe, at the Rose on the Bankside. If you like my playe of Columbus, it is verie well, and you shall give me noe more than twentie poundes for it, but If nott, lett me have it by the Bearer againe, as I know the kinges men will freelie give me as much for it, and the profitts of the third daye moreover.

John Marston, 1599, *Letter to Henslowe*

He had many quarrells with Marston, beat him, and took his pistol from him, wrote his *Poetaster* on him; the beginning of them were, that Marston represented him in the stage, in his youth given to venerie.

William Drummond, 1619, *Notes on Ben Jonson's Conversations*

Of all the dramatists of the time, the most disagreeable in disposition, though by no means the least powerful in mind, was John Marston. The time of his birth is not known; his name is entangled in contemporary records with that of another John Marston; and we may be sure that his mischief-loving spirit would have been delighted could he have anticipated that the antiquaries, a century after his death, would be driven to despair by the difficulty of discriminating one from the other.

Edwin P. Whipple, 1859-68, *The Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*, p. 125

The Malcontent (1604)

We have accordingly no warrant for refusing to Marston the credit of any of the most striking passages in this play, which seems to me almost unapproached by his other productions in its occasional condensed vigour of expression, however greatly we may be tempted to attribute some at least among them to Webster. And there is at all events one example of truly powerful writing not forming part of the additions, and thus undoubtedly the property of Marston, which illustrates the difficulty of trusting too implicitly to instinct in seeking to discriminate between the touch or manner of different poets.

Adolphus William Ward, 1875-99, *A History of English Dramatic Literature*, vol. II, p. 483

Though not free from Marston's two chief vices of coarseness and exaggerated cynicism, it is a play of great merit, and much the best thing he has done, though the reconciliation, at the end, of such a husband and such a wife as Piero and Aurelia, between whom there is a chasm of adultery and murder, again lacks versimilitude.

George Saintsbury, 1887, *History of Elizabethan Literature*, p. 198

Sad and stern, not unhopeful or unloving, the spirit of this poem is more in harmony with that of Webster's later tragedies than with that of Marston's previous plays; its accent is sardonic rather than pessimistic, ironical rather than despondent. The plot is neither well conceived nor well constructed; the catastrophe is little less than absurd, especially from the ethical or moral point of view; the characters are thinly sketched, the situations at once forced and conventional; there are few sorrier or stranger figures in serious fiction than is that of the penitent usurper when he takes to his arms his repentant wife, together with one of her two paramours, in a sudden rapture of forgiving affection; the part which gives the play its name is the only one drawn with any firmness of outline, unless we except that of the malignant and distempered old parasite; but there is a certain interest in the awkward evolution of the story, and there are scenes and passages of singular power and beauty which would suffice to redeem the whole work from condemnation or oblivion, even though it had not the saving salt in it of an earnest and evident sincerity.

Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1888, "John Marston," *The Nineteenth Century*, vol. 24, p. 536

General

It is Marston's misfortune, that he can never keep clear of the impurities of the brothel. His stream of poetry, if sometimes bright and unpolluted,

almost always betrays a muddy bottom. The satirist who too freely indulges himself in the display of that licentiousness which he means to proscribe, absolutely defeats his own design. He inflames those passions which he professes to suppress, gratifies the depravations of a prurient curiosity, and seduces innocent minds to an acquaintance with ideas which they might never have known.

Thomas Warton, 1778-81, *History of English Poetry*, sec. lxv

Marston having consulted regularity and correctness in the conduct of his plays, and besides having written them naturally, and both with humour and pathos, must rank before Decker, and essentially, upon a par with Chapman and Heywood, especially when we are told that his poems rendered him still more celebrated than his plays. Being, however, a severe satirist, his contemporaries were not willing to allow him his due portion of praise, and posterity cannot properly judge of his whole merit. What we know of him, however, ranks him very respectfully as a writer.

Charles Dibdin, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage*, vol. III, p. 263

John Marston is the Skelton or Swift of the Elizabethan period. Like them, he wrote in denunciation and derision of what seemed to him vicious or weakly sentimental; and like them, he impatiently carried a passion for directness of speech to the extremes of coarseness. He was for no half-veiled exposure of vices. . . . Marston's plays are very remarkable and distinctive productions. They are written with amazing energy—energy audacious, defiant, shameless, yet, when viewed in the totality of its manifestations, not unworthy to be called Titanic. They make no pretence to dramatic impartiality; they are written throughout in the spirit of his satires; his puppets walk the stage as embodiments of various ramifications of deadly sins and contemptible fopperies, side by side with virtuous opposites and indignant commenting censors. His characters, indeed, speak and act with vigorous life: they are much more forcible and distinct personalities than Chapman's characters. But though Marston brings out his characters sharply and clearly, and puts them in lifelike motion, they are too manifestly objects of their creator's liking and disliking: some are caricatured, some are unduly black, and some unduly stainless. From one great fault Marston's personages are exceedingly free: they may be overdrawn, and they may be coarse, but they are seldom dull—their life is a rough coarse life, but life it is. And all his serious creations have here and there put into their mouths passages of tremendous energy.

William Minto, 1874-85, *Characteristics of English Poets*, pp. 332, 335

BEN JONSON
1573(?)-1637

Born, in Westminster(?), 1573(?). Educated at St.-Martin's-in-the-Fields Parish School; and at Westminster School. Worked as a bricklayer for a short time; afterwards served with English troops in Flanders. Returned to England about 1592; married soon afterwards. First acted, and wrote for stage, about 1595. Imprisoned for killing a fellow-actor in a duel, 1598. Became a Roman Catholic, same year. *Every Man in His Humour,* produced at Globe Theatre, 1598. Wrote plays for Henslowe's company, 1599-1602. *Sejanus,* produced at Globe Theatre, 1603. Prolific writer of plays; and of Masques, for Court performance, 1605-30. Imprisoned for a short time in connection with political allusions in play *Eastward Ho,* 1605. In France, as tutor to son of Sir W. Raleigh, 1613. Journey to Scotland, on foot, 1618. Elected Burgess of Edinburgh, Sept. 1618. Visited Drummond of Hawthornden. Returned to England, spring of 1619. Visit to Oxford, 1620; received Hon. M.A. degree. Ill-health began, 1626. Chronologer to City of London, Sept. 1628; deprived of Salary, 1631; restored to post, Sept. 1634. Died, in London, 6 Aug. 1637. Buried in Westminster Abbey. WORKS: *Every Man Out of His Humour,* 1600 (2nd edn. same year); *Cynthia's Revels,* 1600; *Every Man in his Humour,* 1601; *Poetaster,* 1602; Additions to *Jeronymo,* 1602; *A Particular Entertainment,* 1603; *Part of King James his . . . Entertainment,* 1604; *Sejanus,* 1605; *Eastward Ho* (with Chapman and Marston), 1605 (3rd edn. same year); *Hymenæi,* 1606; *Volpone,* 1607; *Description of the . . . Masque at Viscount Hadington's Marriage,* 1608; *Epicœne,* 1609; *The Character of two royall Masques,* 1609; *Ben Jonson, his Case is Altered,* 1609; *The Masque of Queenes,* 1609; *Catiline his Conspiracy,* 1611; *The Alchemist,* 1612; *Certayne Masques,* 1615; *Works* (2 vols.), 1616-40; *Lovers Made Men* (known as *The Masque of Lethe,* anon.), 1617; *The Masque of Augures,* 1621; *Neptune's Triumph* (anon.), [1623]; *The Fortunate Isles,* [1624]; *Love's Triumph through Callipolis,* 1630; *Chloridia,* [1630](?); *The New Inne,* 1631. POSTHUMOUS: *The Bloody Brother, by B. J. F.* (mainly by Fletcher; perhaps part by Jonson), 1639; *Underwoods,* 1640; *Excreation against Vulcan,* 1640; *The English Grammar,* 1640; *The Widow* (with Fletcher and Middleton), 1652; *The Fall of Mortimer* (anon.: completed by another hand), 1771; *The Sad Shepherd,* ed. by F. G. Waldron, 1783. He *translated: Horace his Art of Poetrie,* 1640. COLLECTED WORKS: in one vol., 1692; in 7 vols., ed. by Whalley, 1756; ed. by Gifford, 1816.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 152

SEE: *Works,* ed. C. H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn M. Simpson, 1925-52, 11v.; *Complete Poetry,* ed. William B. Hunter, Jr., 1963; Jonas A. Barish, *Ben Jonson and the Language of Prose Comedy,* 1960; Wesley Trimpi, *Ben Jonson's Poems: A Study of the Plain Style,* 1961.

PERSONAL

Sence you weare with me I have lost one of company, which hurteth me greatly, that is Gabrill, for he is slayen in Hogesden fyldes (Hoxton Fields)

by the hands of Bengemen Jonson, bricklayer, therefore I wold fayne have a littell of your counsell yf I would.

Philips Henslowe, 1598, *Letter to Edward Alleyne, Sept. 26, Collier's Memoirs of Edward Alleyne*

A great lover and praiser of himself; a contemner and scorner of others; given rather to losse a friend than a jest; jealous of every word and action of those about him (especiallie after drink, which is one of the elements in which he liveth); a dissembler of ill parts which raigne in him, a bragger of some good that he wanteth; thinketh nothing well bot what either he himself or some of his friends and countrymén hath said or done; he is passionately kynde and angry; careless either to gaine or keep; vindicative, but, if he be well answered, at himself. . . . For religion, as being versed in both. Interpreteth best sayings and deeds often to the worst. Oppressed with fantasie, which hath ever mastered his reason, a generall disease in many Poets. His inventions are smooth and easie; but above all he excelleth in a Translation.

William Drummond, 1619, *Notes on Ben Jonson's Conversations*

Come, leave the loathèd stage,
And the more loathsome age;
Where pride and impudence, in faction knit,
Usurp the chair of wit!
Indicting and arraigning every day
Something they call a play.
Let their fastidious, vain
Commission of the brain
Run on and rage, sweat, censure and condemn;
They were not made for thee, less thou for them.

Ben Jonson, c. 1629, *Ode to Himself*

Ah Ben!
Say how, or when
Shall we thy guests
Meet at those lyric feasts,
Made at the Sun,
The Dog, the Triple Tun?
Where we such clusters had
As made us nobly wild, not mad;
And yet each verse of thine
Outdid the meat, outdid the frolic wine.
My Ben!
Or come again,

Or send to us,
Thy wit's great overplus;
But teach us yet
Wisely to husband it,
Lest we that talent spend;
And having once brought to an end
That precious stock, the store
Of such a wit the world should have no more.

Robert Herrick, 1637(?), *An Ode for Him*

He was (or rather had been) of a clear and faire skin; his habit was very plaine. I have heard Mr. Lacy, the player, say that he was wont to weare a coate like a coachman's coate, with slitts under the arme-pitts. He would many times exceed in drinke (Canarie was his beloved liquour): then he would tumble home to bed, and, when he had thoroughly perspired, then to studie. I have seen his studyeing chaire, which was of strawe, such as old woemen used, and as Aulus Gellius is drawen in. . . . He lies buryed in the north aisle in the path of square stone (the rest is lozenge), opposite to the scutcheon of Robertus de Ros, with this inscription only on him, in a pavement square, of blew marble, about 14 inches square,

O RARE BENN IOHNSON

which was donne at the chardge of Jack Young (afterwards knighted) who, walking there when the grave was covering, gave the fellow eighteen pence to cutt it.

John Aubrey, 1669-96, *Brief Lives*, ed. Clark, vol. II, pp. 12, 13

Jonson hath been often represented as of an envious, arrogant, overbearing temper, and insolent and haughty in his converse; but these ungracious drawings were the performance of his enemies; who certainly were not solicitous to give a flattering likeness of the original. But considering the provocations he received, with the mean and contemptible talents of those who opposed him, what we condemn as vanity or conceit, might be only the exertions of conscious and insulted merit. . . . In his studies Jonson was laborious and indefatigable: his reading was copious and extensive; his memory so tenacious and strong that, when turned of forty, he could have repeated all that he ever wrote: his judgment was accurate and solid; and often consulted by those who knew him well, in branches of very curious learning, and far remote from the flowery paths loved and frequented by the muses.

Peter Whalley, 1756, ed. *Jonson's Works, Life of Jonson*, p. lv

Our dramatic literature has been absolutely poisoned by the malice of Jonson's persecutors. Whoever brought forward an old poet offered up a victim to his fame, and this victim was invariably our author: but while it was generously admitted that the rest of his contemporaries felt his malignity only at intervals, it was universally affirmed that his abuse of Shakspeare was unremitted. Neither writer nor reader ever dreamed of questioning the accuracy of this statement; and nothing could be more amusing than the complacent simplicity with which it was handed down from Mr. Malone to Mr. Weber, from Mr. G. Chalmers to Mr. Stephen Jones. It is to the praise of Mr. Gilchrist that he was the first person who, amidst the general outcry against Jonson, evinced sufficient honesty to investigate the truth, and sufficient courage to declare it. His little Publication startled the critics, though it could not silence them. His triumph, however, was complete; for he had justice on his side: and there is something ludicrous in the half-concessions which the force of his facts occasionally elicits from his opponents.

William Gifford, 1816, ed. *Works of Ben Jonson,* vol. I, p. cxciii

A vigorous, heavy and uncouth person; a wide and long face, early marred by scurvy, a square jaw, enormous cheeks; his animal organs as much developed as those of his intellect; the sour aspect of a man in a passion or on the verge of a passion; to which add the body of an athlete, about forty years of age, "mountain belly, ungracious gait." Such was the outside, and the inside is like it. He is a genuine Englishman, big and coarsely framed, energetic, combative, proud, often morose, and prone to strange splenetic imaginations.

H. A. Taine, 1871, *History of English Literature,*
tr. Van Laun, vol. I, bk. ii, ch. iii, p. 268

Ben Jonson was a genuine scholar, whose chief pride was his library, afterwards destroyed by a fire which inflicted an irreparable loss upon our literature. His love of reading must have been insatiable; of his book-learning numberless illustrations are furnished by his plays, in one of which he bears testimony to it with pardonable self-sufficiency. But to the canary-sack must be ascribed part of the boastfulness which made him tell Drummond that "he was better versed, and knew more in Greek and Latin, than all the Poets in England, and"—here Drummond appears to have imperfectly understood the author of *The English Grammar*—"quintessence their brains."

Adolphus William Ward, 1875-99, *A History of English*
Dramatic Literature, vol. II, p. 314

Every Man in His Humour (1597-98)

Every Man in his Humour is founded on such follies and passions as are perpetually incident to, and connected with, man's nature; such as do not depend upon local custom or change of fashion; and, for that reason, will bid fair to last as long as many of our old comedies. The language of Jonson is very peculiar; in perspicuity and elegance he is inferior to Beaumont and Fletcher, and very unlike the masculine dialogue of Massinger. It is almost needless to observe that he comes far short of the variety, strength, and natural flow, of Shakspeare. To avoid the common idiom, he plunges into stiff, quaint, and harsh, phraseology: he has borrowed more words, from the Latin tongue, than all the authors of his time. However, the style of this play, as well as that of *The Alchemist* and *The Silent Woman,* is more disentangled and free from foreign auxiliaries than the greatest part of his works. Most of the characters are truly dramatic.

Thomas Davies, 1783, *Dramatic Micellanies,* vol. II, p. 53

Every Man in his Humour is perhaps the earliest of European domestic comedies that deserves to be remembered; for even the *Mandragora* of Machiavel shrinks to a mere farce in comparison. A much greater master of comic powers than Jonson was indeed his contemporary, and, as he perhaps fancied, his rival; but, for some reason Shakspeare had never yet drawn his story from the domestic life of his countrymen. Jonson avoided the common defect of the Italian and Spanish theatre, the sacrifice of all other dramatic objects to one only, a rapid and amusing succession of incidents: his plot is slight and of no great complexity; but his excellence is to be found in the variety of his characters, and in their individuality, very clearly defined, with little extravagance.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe,* pt. ii, ch. vi, par. 53

Neither my duly unqualified love for the greater poet nor my duly qualified regard for the less can alter my sense that their mutual relations are in this one case inverted; that *Every Man in his Humour* is altogether a better comedy and work of higher art than *The Merry Wives of Windsor.*

Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1880, *A Study of Shakespeare,* p. 121

The success of *Every Man in his Humor* will surprise no one who has followed the varied and yet simple action of this lively comedy. It is written with all Jonson's precision and in his peculiar manner; but it lacks that rigidity which his manner afterwards assumed. Though the parts of the knavish servant and his young master remind us of the Roman theatre,

Jonson has recast them in accordance with English character and custom. His erudition, indeed, in this play makes itself less prominently felt than in some of his later masterpieces. Kitely, as the jealous husband, deserves a place beside Ford in Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor.*

John Addington Symonds, 1886, *Ben Jonson, (English Worthies)*

Every Man Out of His Humour (1599)

If the reader would see the extravagance of building dramatic manners on abstract ideas, in its full light, he needs only turn to B. Johnson's *Every Man out of his Humour*; which under the name of a *play of character* is in fact, an unnatural, and, as the painters call it, *hard* delineation of a group of simply existing passions, wholly chimerical, and unlike to anything we observe in the commerce of real life. Yet this comedy has always had its admirers. And *Randolph* in particular, was so taken with the design, that he seems to have formed his *muse's looking-glass* in express imitation of it.

Richard Hurd, 1757, *A Dissertation on the Several Provinces of the Drama,* vol. I, p. 266

He is above everything a satirist of vice: he hates it, and he lashes it with a whip of scorpions. Listen to Asper—clearly Jonson himself—in the introduction to *Every Man Out of His Humour.* It is very scathing; but it is very splendid. As a mere question, of language, how nervous it is, how like the very best and strongest utterings of our own time! Contempt is the most frequent note; but sometimes it swells to defiance, and becomes gratuitously, recklessly insulting.

T. E. Brown, 1896, *Ben Jonson, The New Review,* vol. 14, p. 522

Sejanus (1603)

The more we reflect and examine, examine and reflect, the more astonished shall we be at the immense superiority of Shakspere over his contemporaries:—and yet what contemporaries!—giant minds indeed! Think of Jonson's erudition, and the force of learned authority in that age; and yet in no genuine part of Shakspere's works is there to be found such an absurd rant and ventriloquism as this, and too, too many other passages ferruminated by Jonson from Seneca's tragedies and the writings of the later Romans. I call it ventriloquism, because Sejanus is a puppet, out of which the poet makes his own voice appear to come.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1818, *Notes on Ben Jonson,* ed. Ashe, p. 414

Whatever this tragedy may want in the agitating power of poetry, it has a strength and dramatic skill that might have secured it, at least, from the petulant contempt with which it has been too often spoken of. Though collected from the dead languages, it is not a lifeless mass of antiquity, but the work of a severe and strong imagination, compelling shapes of truth and consistency to rise in dramatic order from the fragments of Roman eloquence and history; and an air not only of life but of grandeur is given to those curiously adjusted materials.

Thomas Campbell, 1819, *Specimens of the British Poets*

In 1603, he produced his weighty tragedy of *Sejanus,* at Shakespeare's theatre, The Globe,—Shakespeare himself acting one of the inferior parts. Think of Shakespeare laboriously committing to memory the blank verse of Jonson! Though *Sejanus* failed of theatrical success, its wealth of knowledge and solid thought made it the best of all answers to his opponents. It was as if they had questioned his capacity to build a ship, and he had confuted them with a man-of-war.

Edwin P. Whipple, 1859-68, *The Literature of the Age of Elizabeth,* p. 102

Volpone, or The Fox (1605-06)

. . . the art which thou alone
Hast taught our tongue, the rules of time, of place,
And other rites, delivered with the grace
Of comic style, which only, is far more
Than any English stage hath known before.

Francis Beaumont, 1607?, *To My Dear Friend, Master Ben Jonson, upon his "Fox"*

In the comedy of *The Fox,* there is not much to be censured, except the language, which is so pedantic and struck so full of Latinity, that few, except the learned, can perfectly understand it. "Jonson," says Dr. Young, "brought all the antients upon his head: by studying to speak like a Roman, he forgot the language of his country."

Thomas Davies, 1783, *Dramatic Micellanies,* vol. II, p. 97

The revolting aspects of life exhibited in this comedy are likely to prevent full justice being rendered its merits by most modern readers. Yet it long retained its hold over the national stage, while—which is less to be wondered at—the central character continued for generations to express to the popular mind the incarnation of a most loathsome variety of the vast *genus*

hypocrite. Everybody knows how, at a critical stage of events in the reign of Queen Anne, Dr. Sacheverell in his notorious sermon pointed an attack upon the Whig leaders as representatives of revolution principles, by alluding to the Lord Treasurer Godolphin under the nickname of the Old Fox or Volpone.

Adolphus William Ward, 1875-99, *A History of English Dramatic Literature*, vol. II, p. 363

No other of even his very greatest works is at once so admirable and so enjoyable. The construction or composition of *The Alchemist* is perhaps more wonderful in the perfection and combination of cumulative detail, in triumphant simplicity of process and impeccable felicity of result: but there is in *Volpone* a touch of something like imagination, a savour of something like romance, which gives a higher tone to the style and a deeper interest to the action. The chief agents are indeed what Mr. Carlyle would have called "unspeakably unexemplary mortals": but the serious fervour and passionate intensity of their resolute and resourceful wickedness give somewhat of a lurid and distorted dignity to the display of their doings and sufferings, which is wanting to the less gigantic and heroic villainies of Subtle, Dol, and Face.

Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1889, *A Study of Ben Jonson*, p. 35

Epicoene, or The Silent Woman (1610)

When his play of a *Silent Woman* was first acted, ther was found verses after on the stage against him, concluding that that play was well named *The Silent Woman,* ther was never one man to say Plaudite to it.

William Drummond, 1619, *Notes on Ben Jonson's Conversations*

This is to my feelings the most entertaining of old Ben's comedies, and, more than any other, would admit of being brought out anew, if under the management of a judicious and stage-understanding play-wright; and an actor, who had studied Morose, might make his fortune.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1818, *Notes on Ben Jonson,* ed. Ashe, p. 415

The plot is a distasteful one to my own feelings: it is coarse in design, coarse in its improbability, and, in short, is a direct contradiction of the author's own theory as to that which should characterise *legitimate* comedy; for the play of *Epicene* is little better than a hoydening farce. The character of Morose himself is certainly well sustained, although in it an extreme case is put throughout; and enormous demands are made upon the credulity of

the audience that such a man could be supposed to exist at all, with so morbid a sensitiveness to noise as to poison his whole existence.

Charles Cowden Clarke, 1871, "On the Comic Writers of England," *Gentleman's Magazine*, N.S. vol. 6, p. 643

Of *The Silent Woman* it is not easy to say anything new and true. Its merits are salient and superb: the combination of parts and the accumulation of incidents are so skilfully arranged and so powerfully designed that the result is in its own way incomparable—or comparable only with other works of the master's hand while yet in the fullness of its cunning and the freshness of its strength. But a play of this kind must inevitably challenge a comparison, in the judgment of modern readers, between its author and Molière: and Jonson can hardly, on the whole, sustain that most perilous comparison. It is true that there is matter enough in Jonson's play to have furnished forth two or three of Molière's: and that on that ground—on the score of industrious intelligence and laborious versatility of humour—*The Silent Woman* is as superior to *The Misanthrope* and *The Bourgeois Gentilhomme* as to *Twelfth Night* and *Much Ado about Nothing*. But even when most dazzled by the splendour of studied wit and the felicity of deliberate humour which may even yet explain the extraordinary popularity or reputation of this most imperial and elaborate of all farces, we feel that the author could no more have rivalled the author of *Twelfth Night* than he could have rivalled the author of *Othello*. The Nemesis of the satirist is upon him: he cannot be happy in his work without some undertone of sarcasm, some afterthought of allusion, aimed at matters which Molière would have reserved for a slighter style of satire, and which Shakespeare would scarcely have condescended to recognise as possible objects of even momentary attention. His wit is wonderful—admirable, laughable, laudable—it is not in the fullest and the deepest sense delightful. It is radically cruel, contemptuous, intolerant; the sneer of the superior person—Dauphine or Clerimont —is always ready to pass into a snarl: there is something in this great classic writer of the bull-baiting or bear-baiting brutality of his age.

Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1889, *A Study of Ben Jonson*, p. 50

The Alchemist (1610)

To say, this comedy pleased long ago,
Is not enough to make it past you now.
Yet, gentlemen, your ancestors had wit;
When few men censured, and when fewer writ.
And Jonson, of those few the best, chose this,
As the best model of his masterpiece.
Subtle was got by our Albumazar,

That Alchymist by this Astrologer;
Here he was fashion'd, and we may suppose
He liked the fashion well, who wore the clothes.
But Ben made nobly his what he did mould;
What was another's lead becomes his gold:
Like an unrighteous conqueror he reigns,
Yet rules that well, which he unjustly gains.

John Dryden, 1668, *Albumazar,* Prologue

This comedy, which was laudably written to ridicule a prevailing folly, must, no doubt, have been greatly successful originally, since we have seen it very much followed and admired during the time Garrick ornamented the stage. His incomparable performance, however, of Abel Drugger was a considerable drawback from the proper reputation of the author, and in great measure the cause of the success of the play; at the same time it must be confessed that the best acting can do nothing without good materials, with which certainly the *Alchymist* abounds.

Charles Dibdin, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage,* vol. III, p. 295

The judgment is perfectly overwhelmed by the torment of images, words, and book-knowledge, with which Epicure Mammon (Act 2, Scene 2) confounds and stunts his incredulous hearer. They come pouring out like the successive falls of Nilus. They "doubly redouble strokes upon the foe." Description outstrides proof. We are made to believe effects before we have testimony for their causes. If there is no one image which attains the height of the sublime, yet the confluence and assemblage of them all produces a result equal to the grandest poetry. The huge Xerxean army countervails against single Achilles. Epicure Mammon is the most determined offspring of its author. It has the whole "matter and copy of the father—eye, nose, lip, the trick of his frown." It is just such a swaggerer as contemporaries have described old Ben to be. Meercraft, Bobadil, the Host of the New Inn, have all his image and superscription. But Mammon is arrogant pretension personified. Sir Samson Legend, in *Love for Love,* is such another lying, overbearing character, but he does not come up to Epicure Mammon. What a "towering bravery" there is in his sensuality! he affects no pleasure under a Sultan. It is as if "Egypt with Assyria strove in luxury."

Charles Lamb, 1808, *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare*

Jonson here escaped his usual pitfall of the unsympathetic, for the vices and follies he satirises are not loathsome, only contemptible at worst, and not

always that. He found an opportunity of exercising his extraordinary faculty of concentration as he nowhere else did, and has given us in Sir Epicure Mammon a really magnificent picture of concupiscence, of sensual appetite generally, sublimed by heat of imagination into something really poetic.

George Saintsbury, 1887, *History of Elizabethan Literature*, p. 181

Catiline (1611)

Thy labours shall outlive thee; and, like gold
Stampt for continuance, shall be current, where
There is a sun, a people, or a year.

John Fletcher, 1611?, *To my worthy friend, Ben Jonson, on his Catiline*

With strenuous, sinewy words that Catiline swells,
I reckon it not among men—miracles.
How could that poem well a vigour lack,
When each line oft cost Ben a cup of sack.

R. Baron, 1650, *Pocula Castalia*, p. 113

Catiline is only less interesting than *Sejanus*, because it presents no such difficult problem of characterisation as Tiberius. Within the limits of his subject, however, Jonson has fully availed himself of his opportunities. Each of the characters, notably those of the conspirators, stands out distinctly from the rest; perhaps in his effort to draw distinctly, the dramatist has, after his manner, rather overdrawn the humours, thereby impairing the humanity, of his personages,—the visionary imbecility of Lentulus, the braggadocio of Cethegus, the savage ferocity of Catiline. On the other hand, the oratorical expansiveness of Cicero is delicately, though copiously illustrated; the danger is avoided of rendering him ridiculous, although both his love of speech and his respect for his own achievements are allowed ample expression. Of Cæsar and of Cato enough is hardly made; the key to the double-handed policy of the former is not clearly revealed, while the latter appears too generally as the mere echo of Cicero. The female characters of the play are drawn with a humour nothing less than exuberant.

Adolphus William Ward, 1875-99, *A History of English Dramatic Literature*, vol. II, p. 341

Bartholomew Fair (1614)

This strange play, out of which might be framed the humour of half a dozen farces, is fuller, perhaps, of comic characters than any thing that ever ap-

peared on the stage. We are given to understand that Jonson wrote it purposely to ridicule the age in which he lived, for the prevalent preference given to low wit, instead of polished and refined writing. If this was his motive he has outwitted himself, for there is more nature in *Bartholomew Fair* than in any one of his other works; but yet, being as it is, crammed full of extraneous and heterogeneous incidents, he has as much overshot the mark as he had come short of it in his *Catiline,* which this play was written purposely to defend; that tragedy having nothing interesting in it, on account of its dullness and declamation; and this comedy, on account of its wildness and extravagance.

Charles Dibdin, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage,* vol. III, p. 297

A pure farce, conceived in the spirit of rollicking mirth, and executed with colossal energy. It is no satire either of manners or of individuals, but a broad Dutch painting of the humours of a London Carnival. . . . The personages are admirably studied and grouped together with consummate insight into dramatic effect. The proctor, with his pretty wife and puritanical mother-in-law; the sleek minister from Banbury, who woos the widow; the squire from Harrow, and his watchful attendant.

John Addington Symonds, 1886, *Ben Jonson, (English Worthies),* p. 111

There is no dramatic work in English at all comparable in its own kind with this brilliant and bewildering presentment of a comic turmoil, and, by a curious chance, it is exactly here, where it might be expected that the dramatist would be peculiarly tempted to subordinate all attempt at character-painting to the mere embodiment of humours, that one of Ben Jonson's few really living and breathing creatures is found in the person of the Puritan, Rabbi Zeal-of-the-Land.

Edmund Gosse, 1894, *The Jacobean Poets,* p. 32

General

Our English Horace.

Henry Chettle, 1603, *Englands Mourning Garment*

If I should declare mine own rudeness rudely, I should then confess, that I never tasted English more to my liking, nor more smart, and put to the height of use in poetry, than in that vital, judicious, and most practicable language of Benjamin Jonson's poems.

Edmund Bolton, 1624, *Hypercritica*

Next these, learn'd Jonson in this list I bring,
Who had drunk deep of the Pierian spring,
Whose knowledge did him worthily prefer,
And long was lord here of the theater:
Who in opinion made our learn'd to stick
Whether in poems rightly dramatic
Strong Seneca or Plautus, he or they,
Should bear the buskin and the sock away.

Michael Drayton, c. 1627, *Of Poets and Poesie*

To compare our English Dramatick Poets together (without taxing them) *Shakespear* excelled in a natural Vein, *Fletcher* in Wit, and *Johnson* in Gravity and ponderousness of Style; whose onely fault was, he was too elaborate; and had he mixt less erudition with his Playes, they had been more pleasant and delightful than they are. Comparing him with *Shakespear,* you shall see the difference betwixt Nature and Art; and with *Fletcher,* the difference between Wit and Judgment: Wit being an exuberant thing, like *Nilus,* never more commendable than when it overflowes; but Judgement a stayed and reposed thing, alwayes containing it self within its bounds and limits.

Richard Flecknoe, c. 1660-64, *A Short Discourse of the English Stage*

As for Jonson, to whose character I am now arrived, if we look upon him while he was himself (for his last plays were but his dotages), I think him the most learned and judicious writer which any theatre ever had. He was a most severe judge of himself, as well as others. One cannot say he wanted wit, but rather that he was frugal of it. In his works you find little to retrench or alter. Wit and language, and humour also in some measure, we had before him; but something of art was wanting to the drama, till he came. He managed his strength to more advantage than any who preceded him. You seldom find him making love in any of his scenes, or endeavouring to move the passions; his genius was too sullen and saturnine to do it gracefully, especially when he knew he came after those who had performed both to such an height. Humour was his proper sphere; and in that he delighted most to represent mechanic people. He was deeply conversant in the ancients, both Greek and Latin, and he borrowed boldly from them: there is scarce a poet or historian among the Roman authors of those times, whom he has not translated in *Sejanus* and *Catiline*. But he has done his robberies so openly, that one may say he fears not to be taxed by any law. He invades authors like a monarch; and what would be theft in other poets, is only victory in him. With the spoils of these writers he so represents old Rome to us, in its rites, ceremonies, and customs, that if one of their poets

had written either of his tragedies, we had seen less of it than in him. If there was any fault in his language, it was, that he weaved it too closely and laboriously, in his comedies especially: perhaps, too, he did a little too much Romanize our tongue, leaving the words which he translated almost as much Latin as he found them: wherein, though he learnedly followed their language, he did not enough comply with the idiom of ours. If I would compare him with Shakespeare, I must acknowledge him the more correct poet, but Shakespeare the greater wit. Shakespeare was the Homer, or father of our dramatic poets; Jonson was the Virgil, the pattern of elaborate writing; I admire him, but I love Shakespeare. To conclude of him; as he has given us the most correct plays, so in the precepts which he has laid down in his *Discoveries,* we have as many and profitable rules for perfecting the stage, as any wherewith the French can furnish us.

John Dryden, 1668-93, *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy; Works,* ed. Scott and Saintsbury, vol. XV, p. 346

His nature was severe and rigid, and this in giving a strength and manliness, gave at times too, an intemperance to his satyr. His taste for ridicule was strong but indelicate, which made him not over curious in the choice of his *topics.* And lastly, his *style* in picturing characters, tho' masterly, was without that elegance of *hand,* which is required to correct and allay the force of so bold a colouring. Thus, the biass of his nature leading him to Plautus rather than Terence for his model, it is not to be wondered that his wit is too frequently caustic; his raillery coarse; and his humour excessive.

Richard Hurd, 1757, *A Dissertation on the Several Provinces of the Drama,* vol. I, p. 306

He endeavoured to form an exact estimate of what he had on every occasion to perform; hence he succeeded best in that species of the drama which makes the principal demand on the understanding and with little call on the imagination and feeling,—the comedy of character. He introduced nothing into his works which critical dissection should not be able to extract again, as his confidence in it was such, that he conceived it exhausted everything which pleases and charms us in poetry. He was not aware that in the chemical retort of the critic what is most valuable, the volatile living spirit of a poem, evaporates. His pieces are in general deficient in soul, in that nameless something which never ceases to attract and enchant us even because it is indefinable. In the lyrical pieces, his Masques, we feel the want of a certain mental music of imagery and intonation, which the most accurate observation of difficult measures cannot give. He is everywhere deficient in those excellencies which, unsought, flow from the poet's pen, and which no artist who purposely hunts for them can ever hope to find. We must not

quarrel with him, however, for entertaining a high opinion of his own works, since whatever merits they have he owed, like acquired moral properties, altogether to himself. The production of them was attended with labour, and unfortunately it is also a labour to read them. They resemble solid and regular edifices, before which, however, the clumsy scaffolding still remains, to interrupt and prevent us from viewing the architecture with ease and receiving from it a harmonious impression.

Augustus William Schlegel, 1809, *Dramatic Art and Literature*

With such extraordinary requisites for the stage, joined to a strain of poetry always manly, frequently lofty, and sometimes almost sublime, it may, at first, appear strange that his dramas are not more in vogue; but a little attention to his peculiar modes and habits of thinking will, perhaps, enable us in some measure to account for it. The grace and urbanity which mark his lighter pieces he laid aside whenever he approached the stage, and put on the censor with the stock. This system (whether wise or unwise,) naturally led to circumstances which affect his popularity as a writer; he was obliged, as one of his critics justly observes, "to hunt down his own characters," and, to continue the metaphor, he was frequently carried too far in the chase.

William Gifford, 1816, ed. *The Works of Ben Jonson, Memoir*, vol. I

Desiring the strongest immediate effect, rather than the best effect, he subserved by wholesale in his comedies to the grossness and commonplace of the very multitude whom he hectored; and in love with whatsoever he knew or uttered, he set learning above feeling in writing his tragedies, and never knew when to leave off, whether in tragedy or comedy. His style is more clear and correct than impassioned, and only rises above a certain level at remarkable intervals, when he is heated by a sense of luxury or domination. He betrays what was weak in himself, and even a secret misgiving, by incessant attacks upon the weakness and envy of others; and, in his highest moods, instead of the healthy, serene, and good-natured might of Shakspeare, has something of a puffed and uneasy pomp, a bigness instead of greatness, analogous to his gross habit of body: nor, when you think of him at any time, can you well separate the idea from that of the assuming scholar and the flustered man of taverns.

Leigh Hunt, 1839, *Men, Women, and Books*, vol. II

We of this age, a little too careless perhaps of learned labor, would give a whole wilderness of Catilines and Poetasters, and even of Alchemists and Volpones, for another score of the exquisite lyrics which are scattered carelessly through the plays and masques which—strange contrast with the

rugged verse in which they are imbedded—seem to have burst into being at a stroke, just as the evening primrose flings open her fair petals at the close of the day. Lovelier songs were never written than these wild and irregular ditties.

Mary Russell Mitford, 1851, *Recollections of a Literary Life,* ch. xix

He read the best Latin books, and the commentaries which illustrated them; he wrote two plays on subjects taken from Roman history. Very striking subjects they were. The hero of one was Catiline, who tried to overthrow the social order of the Republic; the hero of the other was Sejanus, who represents, by his grandeur and his fall, the very character and spirit of the Empire in the days of Tiberius. In dealing with these subjects, Ben Jonson had the help of two of the greatest Roman authors, both of them possessing remarkable powers of narration, one of them a man of earnest character, subtle insight, deep reflection. Though few men in his day understood these authors, and the government and circumstances of Rome, better than Jonson, though he was a skilful and experienced play-writer, most readers are glad when they have got Catiline and Sejanus fairly done with. They do not find that they have received any distinct impressions from them of Roman life; to learn what it was they must go to the authors whom he has copied.

Frederick Denison Maurice, 1856-74, *The Friendship of Books and Other Lectures,* ed. Hughes, p. 8

His literary influence was very great, and with Donne he determined the whole course of English literature for many years and retained a great name even in the comparative eclipse of the "Giant Race" after the Restoration. It was only when the study of Shakespere became a favourite subject with persons of more industry than intelligence in the early eighteenth century, that a singular fabric of myth grew up round Ben Jonson. He was pictured as an incarnation of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, directed in the first place towards Shakespeare, and then towards all other literary craftsmen. William Gifford, his first competent editor, set himself to work to destroy this, and undoubtedly succeeded. But the acrimony with which Gifford tinctured all his literary polemic perhaps rather injured his treatment of the case; even yet it may be doubted whether Ben Jonson has attained anything like his proper place in English literary history. . . . His lovely "Masques" are probably unread by all but a few scores, if so many, in each generation. His noble sinewy prose is, for the most part, unattractive in subject. His minor poems, though not a few of them are known even to smatterers in literature, are as a whole (or at least it would seem so) unknown. Yet his merits are extraordinary.

George Saintsbury, 1887, *History of Elizabethan Literature,* pp. 176, 177

It was Jonson who first revealed to the age the literary possibilities of the masque, and lesser men were not slow to follow in the path which he had marked out. Had it not been for Jonson, it is hardly too much to say that the masque would today be the exclusive property of the Court chronicler and the antiquarian, and of no more significance to literature than a tilting match or a Christmas gambol.

Herbert Arthur Evans, 1897, *English Masques,* Introduction, p. xi

THOMAS CAREW

1595?-1640

Descendant of old family in Gloucestershire. Educated at Oxford. After degree earned in 1611, he travelled to Italy with Ambassador Carleton; later became Carleton's secretary. Also travelled to France as member of Lord Herbert's retinue, 1619. Served Charles I as Gentleman of the Privy Chamber, 1628, and Taster-in-ordinary to the King, 1630. His poetry continues the tradition of the courtier, and its chief characteristics are elegance and scholarly sensibility. A friend of Suckling, his verses often exhibit the Cavalier tone of tenderness, sensuous ease and tuneful polish. Carew died in 1639, and several editions of his poems, which first appeared in 1640, have been published. Carew also wrote a witty masque, *Coelum Britannicum,* in 1634.

SEE: *Poems,* ed. Rhodes Dunlap, 1949; Edward I. Selig, *The Flourishing Wreath: A Study of Thomas Carew's Poetry,* 1958.

PERSONAL

He became reckon'd among the chiefest of his time for delicacy of wit and poetic fancy. About which time being taken into the Royal Court for his most admirable ingenuity, was made Gentleman of the Privy Chamber and Sewer in Ordinary to K. Ch. I who always esteemed him to the last one of the most celebrated wits in his Court, and therefore by him as highly valued, so afterwards grieved at his untimely death. He was much respected, if not ador'd by the poets of his time, especially by Ben Johnson.

Anthony Wood, 1691-1721, *Athenæ Oxonienses,* vol. I, f. 630

As an amatory poet, he is far superior to Waller: he had equal smoothness and fancy, and much more variety, tenderness, and earnestness; if his love was less ambitiously, and even less honourably placed, it was, at least, more deep seated, and far more fervent. The real name of the lady he has celebrated under the poetical appellation of Celia, is not known—it is only certain that she was no "fabled fair,"—and that his love was repaid with falsehood.

Anna Brownell Jameson, 1829, *The Loves of the Poets,* vol. II, p. 4

The writings of Carew abound with conceits, but, unlike the conceits of some of his less noted contemporaries, they generally reconcile themselves to us by good taste in the treatment and delicacy of execution. We look back with changed feelings and different eyes upon these things; time has wrought a powerful alteration in the position before the world of old Sir Matthew Carew, the respectable and ill-fated Master in Chancery: his gallant son Sir Matthew, who was doubtless viewed as the hope and mainstay of the family: and the scapegrace youth to whom no one would have anything to say, and of whom his relatives despaired. For while the lives and fortunes of the high judicial functionary and the brave young knight-banneret are forgotten, while the persons of rank, fashion and influence with whom they mixed have passed, for the most part, completely away, and while even Sir Dudley Carleton is familiar only to a few antiquaries, the lustre which one man of genius has shed on the name of Carew remains unfaded, and can never decline.

W. Carew Hazlitt, 1870, ed., *The Poems of Thomas Carew,* p. xlviii

There is an uncertainty about the time of Carew's death. It looks as if his life had been shortened by his irregular habits. When he was stricken down by mortal sickness, he sent for Hales of Eton to administer to him the consolations of religion. Hales seems to have thought very meanly of him, and made no secret of his low opinion. Carew has left some wretched attempts at versifying a few of the Psalms; these Mr. Hazlitt has printed. They have not a single merit. Carew probably died in 1639, but no entry of his burial has been found. The illness that led him to a maudlin kind of repentance seems to have come upon him when he was in the country. If he recovered enough from it to return to London, he probably died at his house in King Street, St. James's.

Augustus Jessopp, 1887, *Dictionary of National Biography,* vol. IX, p. 63

General

He was a person of a pleasant and facetious wit, and made many poems, especially in the amorous way, which, for the sharpness of the fancy, and the elegancy of the language in which that fancy was spread, were at least equal, if not superior to any of that time.

Lord Clarendon (Edward Hyde), 1674?, *Life,* p. 9

One of the famed poets of his time for the charming sweetness of his lyric odes and amorous sonnets. . . . By the strength of his curious fancy hath written many things which still maintain their fame amidst the curious of the present age.

Anthony Wood, 1691-1721, *Athenæ Oxonienses,* vol. I, f. 630

This elegant and almost forgotten writer, whose poems have been deservedly revived.

Thomas Percy, 1765, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*

The want of boldness and expansion in Carew's thoughts and subjects, excludes him from rivalship with *great* poetical names; nor is it difficult, even within the narrow pale of his works, to discover some faults of affectation, and of still more objectionable indelicacy. But among the poets who have walked in the same limited path, he is pre-eminently beautiful, and deservedly ranks among the earliest of those who gave a cultivated grace to our lyrical strains. His slowness in composition was evidently that sort of care in the poet, which saves trouble to his reader. His poems have touches of elegance and refinement, which their trifling subjects could not have yielded without a delicate and deliberate exercise of the fancy; and he unites the point and polish of later times with many of the genial and warm tints of the elder muse. Like Waller, he is by no means free from conceit; and one regrets to find him addressing the surgeon bleeding Celia, in order to tell him that the blood which he draws proceeds not from the fair one's arm, but from the lover's heart. But of such frigid thoughts he is more sparing than Waller; and his conceptions, compared to that poet's, are like fruits of a richer flavour, that have been cultured with the same assiduity.

Thomas Campbell, 1819, *Specimens of the British Poets*

Among the Royalist lyrists of the seventeenth century Carew takes a foremost place. In genius he is surpassed by Herrick only, and in age he is the first of that gallant band of cavalier song-writers of whom Rochester is the last. Born in the flush of the Elizabethan summer, when the whole garden of English poetry was ablaze with blossom, he lived to hand down to his followers a tradition of perfume and dainty form, that vivified the autumn of the century with a little Martin's summer of his own. . . . Carew was far too indolent to trouble himself with the rhetoric of the schools or to speculate upon the conduct of the mind. He loved wine, and roses, and fair florid women, to whom he could indite joyous or pensive poems about their beauty, adoring it while it lasted, regretting it when it faded. . . . The claim of Carew to a place among the artificers of our language must not be overlooked. In his hands English verse took a smooth and flexible character that had neither the splendours nor the discords of the great Elizabethan school, but formed an admirable medium for gentle thought and florid reverie. The praise that Voltaire gave to Waller might be transferred to Carew if it were not that to give such praise to any one writer is uncritical. But Waller might never have written, and the development of English verse would be still unbroken, whereas Carew is a necessary link between the

Elizabethans and Prior. He represents the main stream of one of the great rivers of poetic influence proceeding from Ben Jonson, and he contrived to do so much because he remained so close to that master and yet in his particular vein excelled him.

Edmund Gosse, 1880, *English Poets,* ed. Ward, vol. II, pp. 111, 112, 113

Instead of Carew's poetry being characteristically euphuistic, licentious, trivial, and sporadic, the exact opposite is the truth. It is true that he has his concetti, like the other poets of his day, but they are relatively to the whole of his verse but a small proportion. . . . With a very slight deduction, his volume is good throughout. There are few pages on which one is not struck by something fine. Carew was an artist as well as a poet. If he in some slight degree misses the gay, artless charm of Suckling, he has a more serious attractiveness. There is a richness and dignity, likewise an intellectual force, in his verse which lifts him to the rank of a serious poet, and makes one regret that, with such natural gifts and artistic acquirements, he did not devote himself to poetry more continuously and of set purpose. For, to a considerable degree, he shared with Waller the gift of the stately line, and his verse has that body and glamour in which for the most part Waller's is deficient. There was indeed a drop of the ruddy Elizabethan blood in Carew.

Richard LeGallienne, 1894-95, *Retrospective Reviews,* vol. II, pp. 77, 79

Carew has been unjustly condemned by Hazlitt as "an elegant Court trifler" in poetry. But it must be granted that he was a master of lyrical form, and that he had a rare sense of delicacy, which he combined too seldom with a manly glow and vigor of passion. He just misses being the equal of Herrick.

J. Logie Robertson, 1894, *A History of English Literature,* p. 106

Carew's largest work was the masque, *Coelum Britannicum,* with the production of which the court had tried, in 1634, to outrival the magnificence of the performance of Shirley's *Triumph of Peace* at the Inns of Court. It is of but slight literary interest, the words being subordinated to elaborate scenic effects. But Carew also wrote a small number of poems, almost all short, in the style of amorous addresses then coming into vogue; and it is on these that his claim to a high place among lyrical poets rests. They are polished with the utmost care, and are marked by a cultivated grace exceeding that of most, if not all, the lyrical poets of his time. They are also "reasonable," in a sense in which those of Donne or Crawshaw are not. . . . It is true that in Carew's verses there is little of Herrick's freshness

and unstudied grace, but there is a self-restraint and balance that is almost, if not quite, an adequate compensation.

J. Howard B. Masterman, 1897, *The Age of Milton,* pp. 95, 96

JOHN FORD

1586-1640?

Born at Islington, Devonshire, England, 1586 (baptized April 17); father was of old landed family, mother was a sister of Lord Chief Justice Popham. Studied at Exeter College, Oxford, 1601; entered Middle Temple, 1602, and practiced law for several years. He published a long poem on the death of the Earl of Devonshire, *Fame's Memorials,* 1606. Little literary work until 1620; one play, *An Ill Beginning Has a Good End,* 1613, said to have been burnt by Warburton's cook. In 1620 Ford started writing professionally for the stage. Collaborated with Webster, Dekker, and Rowley on plays now lost. In 1628, at age of 42, Ford began his independent stage work. After 1639 Ford vanished from records; one report indicated he married, had children and retired from the theatre. His principal plays are *The Lover's Melancholy* (printed 1629), *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1633), *Love's Sacrifice* (1633), *The Chronicle History of Perkin Warbeck* (1634), *Fancies Chaste and Noble* (1638), *The Lady's Trial* (1639), *The Sun's Darling* (with Dekker, printed 1656, written 1624); *The Witch of Edmonton* (with Dekker, Rowley, etc., printed 1658, written 1622).

See: *Dramatic Works,* ed. A. Dyce (revision of W. Gifford, 1827), 1869; G. F. Sensabaugh, *The Tragic Muse of John Ford,* 1944; H. J. Oliver, *The Problem of John Ford,* 1955.

Personal

Of his social habits there little can be told with certainty. There is sufficient, however, to show that he lived, if not familiarly, yet friendlily, with the dramatic writers of his day, and neither provoked nor felt personal enmities. He speaks, indeed, of opposition; but this is merely the language of the stage; opposition is experienced by every dramatic writer worth criticism, and has nothing in common with ordinary hostility. In truth, with the exception of an allusion to the "voluminous" and rancorous Prynne, nothing can be more general than his complaints. Yet Ford looked not much to the brighter side of life; he could, like Jaques, "suck melancholy out of a song as a weasel sucks eggs"; but he was unable, like this wonderful creation of our great poet, to extract mirth from it. When he touched a lighter string, the tones, though pleasingly modulated, were still sedate; and it must, I think, be admitted that his poetry is rather that of a placid and serene than of a happy mind: he was in truth, an amiable ascetic amidst a busy world.

William Gifford, 1827, ed. *Dramatic Works of John Ford,* Introduction

He seems to have been a proud, reserved, austere kind of man, of few and warm attachments, with but slender gifts in the way of ebullient spirits or social flow. He was a barrister, with a respectable ancestry to look back to; and though he wrote several plays, and did not disdain to work in conjunction with such a professional playwright as Dekker, he was nervously anxious lest it should be supposed that he made his living by playwriting. In his first Prologue he spoke contemptuously of such as made poetry a trade, and he took more than one opportunity of protesting that his plays were the fruits of leisure, the issue of less serious hours. Some of his plays he dedicated to noblemen, but he was careful to assure them that it was not his habit to court greatness, and that his dedication was a simple offering of respect without mercenary motive.

William Minto, 1874-85, *Characteristics of English Poets*, p. 360

'Tis Pity She's a Whore (1633)

Thence to Salisbury Court play house, where was acted the first time *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, a simple play and ill acted, only it was my fortune to sit by a most pretty and most ingenious lady which pleased me much.

Samuel Pepys, 1661, *Diary*, Sept. 9

All we can say in favour of Ford is, to wish he had employed his beautiful writing to a more laudable purpose.

Charles Dibdin, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage*, vol. III, p. 280

Ford was of the first order of poets. He sought for sublimity, not by parcels, in metaphors or visible images, but directly where she has her full residence in the heart of man; in the actions and sufferings of the greatest minds. There is a grandeur of the soul above mountains, seas, and the elements. Even in the poor perverted reason of Giovanni and Annabella, in the play which stands at the head of the modern collection of the works of this author, we discern traces of that fiery particle, which, in the irregular starting from out the road of beaten action, discovers something of a right line even in obliquity, and shows hints of an improvable greatness in the lowest descents and degradations of our nature.

Charles Lamb, 1808, *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare*

It has been lamented that the play of his which has been most admired *('Tis Pity She's a Whore)* had not a less exceptionable subject. I do not know, but I suspect that the exceptionableness of the subject is that which constitutes

the chief merit of the play. The repulsiveness of the story is what gives it its critical interest; for it is a studiously prosaic statement of facts, and naked declaration of passions. It was not the least of Shakspeare's praise, that he never tampered with unfair subjects. His genius was above it; his taste kept aloof from it. I do not deny the power of simple painting and polished style in this tragedy in general, and of a great deal more in some few of the scenes, particularly in the quarrel between Annabella and her husband, which is wrought up to a pitch of demoniac scorn and phrensy with consummate art and knowledge; but I do not find much other power in the author (generally speaking) than that of playing with edged tools, and knowing the use of poisoned weapons.

William Hazlitt, 1820, *Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*, p. 136

It is somewhat unfortunate that the very title of Ford's masterpiece should sound so strangely in the ears of a generation "whose ears are the chastest part about them." For of these great twin tragedies the first-born is on the whole the greater. The subtleties and varieties of individual character do not usually lie well within the reach of Ford's handling; but in the part of Giovanni we find more of this power than elsewhere. Here the poet has put forth all his strength; the figure of his protagonist stands out complete and clear. There is more ease and life in it than in his other sculptures; though here as always Ford is rather a sculptor of character than a painter. But the completeness, the consistency of design is here all the worthier of remark, that we too often find this the most needful quality for a dramatist wanting in him as in other great writers of his time.

Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1875, "John Ford," *Essays and Studies*, p. 278

The man who thus conceived the horrors of the Italian Renaissance in the spirit in which they were committed is Ford. In his great play he has caught the very tone of the Italian Renaissance: the abominableness of the play consisting not in the coarse slaughter scenes added merely to please the cockpit of an English theatre, but in the superficial innocence of tone; in its making evil lose its appearance of evil, even as it did to the men of the Renaissance.

Vernon Lee, 1884, *Euphorion*, vol. I, p. 99

Unlike most of his Elizabethan brethren, was ever a deliberate, cool, calculating literary workman, and while he is weaving this story of abnormal passion and investing it with all the grace and charm at his command, it is manifest that he is nowise carried away by the imaginative contemplation

of it himself, but is all the while curiously studying the monstrous growth of his own diseased fancy in a cold anatomical fashion that rouses our moral repugnance in direct proportion as it excites our æsthetic admiration. He is always the craftsman, possessing a faculty of self-criticism rare among his compeers of that age.

William Watson, 1893, *Excursions in Criticism,* p. 10

Here Ford is at his best—and worst. He is the dramatist of passion—passion that neither inspires or ennobles; but drives on its victims with the awful force of irresistible destiny. Lost souls, struggling in the mælstrom of overmastering fate, with no issue possible but self-destruction; and here and there a "despicable buffoon" to make coarse and insane jests—these are the elements of Ford's tragedy. The theme of the play is repulsive; it affords the most characteristic example of that straining after the fantastic and extraordinary, which marked the close of a literary period that seemed to have exhausted the simpler possibilities of tragedy.

J. Howard B. Masterman, 1897, *The Age of Milton,* p. 81

The Broken Heart (1633)

I do not know where to find, in any play, a catastrophe so grand, so solemn, and so surprising as in this. . . . What a noble thing is the soul in its strengths and its weaknesses! Who would be less weak than Calantha? Who can be so strong? The expression of this transcendent scene almost bears us in imagination to Calvary and the Cross; and we seem to perceive some analogy between the scenical sufferings which we are here contemplating, and the real agonies of that final completion to which we dare no more than hint a reference.

Charles Lamb, 1808, *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare*

Except the last scene of *The Broken Heart* (which I think extravagant—others may think it sublime, and be right) they are merely exercises of style and effusions of wire-drawn sentiment.

William Hazlitt, 1820, *Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth,* p. 137

The Broken Heart has generally been reckoned his finest tragedy; and if the last act had been better prepared, by bringing the love of Calantha for Ithocles more fully before the reader in the earlier part of the play, there would be very few passages of deeper pathos in our dramatic literature.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe,* pt. iii, ch. vi, par. 97

Ford can fill the ear and soul singly, with the trumpet-note of his pathos; and in its pauses you shall hear the murmuring voices of nature,—such a nightingale, for instance, as never sang on a common night. Then that death scene in *The Broken Heart* who has equalled *that?* It is single in the drama, —the tragic of tragedy and the sublime of grief.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 1842-63, *The Book of the Poets*

Even in that single play of Ford's which comes nearest to the true pathetic, *The Broken Heart,* there is too much apparent artifice, and Charles Lamb's comment on its closing scene is worth more than all Ford ever wrote. But a critic must look at it *minus* Charles Lamb. We may read as much of ourselves into a great poet as we will; we shall never cancel our debt to him. In the interests of true literature we should not honor fraudulent drafts upon our imagination.

James Russell Lowell, 1887-92, "Massinger and Ford," *The Old English Dramatists,* ed. Norton, p. 129

Perkin Warbeck (1634)

It is indeed the best specimen of the historic drama to be found out of Shakspeare; and, as a compact consecutive representation of a portion of English history, excels *King John* or the two Parts of *Henry IV*. It has as much unity as the dramatic history admits or requires; a clearly defined catastrophe, to which every incident contributes, and every scene advances. Ford showed great judgment in selecting a manageable episode of history, instead of a reign or a "life and death," which no one but Shakspeare could ever make practicable.

Hartley Coleridge, 1840, *The Dramatic Works of Massinger and Ford,* Introduction, p. lviii

As the last attempt at historical drama it suffers by contrast with the masterpieces of Shakespeare, but its merits are considerable, and entirely different from those of Ford's other works. The tragedy is founded on Bacon's *Life of Henry the Seventh,* and the character of the monarch is developed with skill and discretion. The play, interesting, dignified and occasionally humorous, seems to indicate that Ford's genius was capable of a wider range than his prevailing melancholy allowed. We doubt, indeed, whether more to wonder that he should have written one such play, or that, having written one, he should have written no more.

J. Howard B. Masterman, 1897, *The Age of Milton,* p. 82

General

The author has not much of the oratorical stateliness and imposing flow of Massinger; nor a great deal of the smooth and flexible diction, the wandering fancy, and romantic sweetness of Beaumont and Fletcher; and yet he comes nearer to these qualities than to any of the distinguishing characteristics of Jonson or Shakespeare. He excels most in representing the pride and gallantry, and high-toned honour of youth, and the enchanting softness, or the mild and graceful magnanimity of female character. There is a certain melancholy air about his most striking representations; and, in the tender and afflicting pathetic, he appears to us occasionally to be second only to him who has never yet had an equal. The greater part of every play, however, is bad; and there is not one which does not contain faults sufficient to justify the derision even of those who are incapable of conprehending its contrasted beauties. The diction we think for the most part beautiful, and worthy of the inspired age which produced it.

Francis, Lord Jeffrey, 1811-44, *Contributions to the Edinburgh Review,* vol. II, p. 301

I know few things more difficult to account for than the deep and lasting impression made by the more tragic portions of Ford's poetry. Whence does it derive that resistless power which all confess, of afflicting, I had almost said harassing, the better feelings? It is not from any peculiar beauty of language,—for in this he is equalled by his contemporaries, and by some of them surpassed; nor is it from any classical or mythological allusions happily recollected and skilfully applied,—for of these he seldom avails himself; it is not from any picturesque views presented to the mind,—for of imaginative poetry he has little or nothing; he cannot conjure up a succession of images, whether grave or gay, to flit across the fancy or play in the eye. Yet it is hardly possible to peruse his passionate scenes without the most painful interest, the most heart-thrilling delight. This can only arise—at least I can conceive nothing else adequate to the excitement of such sensations—from the overwhelming efficacy of intense thought devoted to the embodying of conceptions adapted to the awful situations in which he has, imperceptibly and with matchless felicity, placed his principal characters.

William Gifford, 1827, ed., *Dramatic Works of John Ford,* Introduction

He stands apart among his fellows, without master or follower; he has learnt little from Shakespeare or Marlowe, Jonson or Fletcher. . . . The poetry of Ford is no branch or arm of that illimitable sea; it might rather be likened to a mountain lake shut in by solitary highlands, without visible

outlet or inlet, seen fitlier by starlight than by sunlight; much such an one as the Lac de Gaube above Cauterets, steel-blue and sombre, with a strange attraction for the swimmer in its cold smooth reticence and breathless calm. For nothing is more noticeable in this poet than the passionless reason and equable tone of style with which in his greatest works he treats of the deepest and most fiery passions, the quiet eye with which he searches out the darkest issues of emotion, the quiet hand with which he notes them down. At all times his verse is even and regular, accurate and composed; never specially flexible or melodious, always admirable for precision, vigour, and purity. . . . No poet is less forgettable than Ford; none fastens (as it were) the fangs of his genius and his will more deeply in your memory. You cannot shake hands with him and pass by; you cannot fall in with him and out again at pleasure; if he touch you once he takes you, and what he takes he keeps his hold of; his work becomes part of your thought and parcel of your spiritual furniture for ever; he signs himself upon you as with a seal of deliberate and decisive power. His force is never the force of accident; the casual divinity of beauty which falls as though direct from heaven upon stray lines and phrases of some poets falls never by any such heavenly chance on his; his strength of impulse is matched by his strength of will; he never works more by instinct than by resolution. . . . By the might of a great will seconded by the force of a great hand he won the place he holds against all odds of rivalry in a race of rival giants. In that gallery of monumental men and mighty memories, among or above the fellows of his godlike craft, the high figure of Ford stands steadily erect; his name is ineffaceable from the scroll of our great writers; it is one of the loftier landmarks of English poetry.

Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1875, "John Ford," *Essays and Studies*, pp. 276, 277, 312

In reading him again after a long interval, with elements of wider comparison, and provided with more trustworthy tests, I find that the greater part of what I once took on trust as precious is really paste and pinchbeck. His plays seem to me now to be chiefly remarkable for that filigree-work of sentiment which we call sentimentality. The word "alchemy" once had a double meaning. It was used to signify both the process by which lead could be transmuted into gold, and the alloy of baser metal by which gold could be adulterated without losing so much of its specious semblance as to be readily detected. The ring of the true metal can be partially imitated, and for a while its glow, but the counterfeit grows duller as the genuine grows brighter with wear. The greater poets have found out the ennobling secret, the lesser ones the trick of falsification. Ford seems to me to have

been a master in it. He abounds especially in mock pathos. I remember when he thoroughly imposed on me.

James Russell Lowell, 1892, "Massinger and Ford," *The Old English Dramatists,* ed. Norton, p. 128

ROBERT BURTON
1577-1640

Robert Burton, author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy,* was born at Lindley, Leicestershire, on the 8th February 1576. He attended the grammar schools of Nuneaton and Sutton Coldfields, and at the age of seventeen entered Brasenose College, Oxford. In 1599 he was elected student of Christ Church, and in 1614 took the degree of B. D. In 1616 he was presented to the vicarage of St. Thomas, and in 1636 to the rectory of Segrave. He died on the 25th of January 1639-40. "*The Anatomy of Melancholy,* what it is, with all the kinds, causes, symptoms, prognostics, and several cures of it: In three partitions, with their several sections, members, and sub-sections, philosophically, medicinally, historically opened and cut up: By Democritus Junior, with a satyrical preface conducing to the following discourse," was published in 1621. Our information with regard to the strange author of this strange book is very scanty.

Thomas Spencer Baynes, 1875, ed., *Encyclopædia Britannica,* Ninth ed., vol. IV, p. 571

SEE: *The Anatomy of Melancholy,* ed. Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith, 1927; *The Anatomy of Melancholy. A Selection,* ed. Lawrence Babb, 1965; Paul Jordan-Smith, *Bibliographica Burtonia. A Study of Robert Burton's The Anatomy of Melancholy,* 1931; William R. Mueller, *The Anatomy of Robert Burton's England,* 1944; Lawrence Babb, *Sanity in Bedlam: A Study of Burton's 'Anatomy of Melancholy',* 1959.

PERSONAL

He was an exact mathematician, a curious calculator of nativities, a general read scholar, a thoro'-pac'd philologist, and one that understood the surveying of lands well. As he was by many accounted a severe student, a devourer of authors, a melancholy and humorous person; so by others, who knew him well, a person of great honesty, plain dealing and charity. I have heard some of the ancients of Ch. Ch. often say that his company was very merry, facetate and juvenile, and no man in his time did surpass him for his ready and dexterous interlarding his common discourses among them with verses from the poets or sentences from classical authors. Which being then all the fashion in the university, made his company more acceptable. . . . He the said R. Burton paid his last debt to nature, in his chamber in Ch. Ch. at,

or very near that time, which he had some years before foretold from the calculation of his own nativity. Which being exact, several of the students did not forbear to whisper among themselves, that rather than there should be a mistake in the calculation, he sent up his soul to heaven thro' a slip about his neck. His body was afterwards with due solemnity buried near that of Dr. Rob. Weston, in the north aisle which joyns next to the choir of the Cath. of Ch. Church, on the 27 of January in sixteen hundred thirty and nine. Over his grave was soon after erected a comely monument on the upper pillar of the said isle, with his bust painted to the life: On the right hand of which, is the calculation of his nativity, and under the bust this inscription made by himself; all put up by the care of William Burton his brother. *Paucis notus, paucioribus ignotus, hic jacet Democritus junior, cui vitam dedit, &c., mortem Melancholia. Obiit viii. Id. Jan. A. C. M. DCXXXIX.* He left behind him a very choice library of books, many of which he bequeathed to that of Bodley, and a hundred pounds to buy five pounds yearly for the supplying of Ch. Ch. library with books.

Anthony Wood, 1691-1721, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, vol. I, f. 628

Mr. Burton was one of the most facetious and pleasant companions of that age, but his conversation was very innocent. It was the way then to mix a great deal of Latin in discoursing, at which he was wonderfull ready, (in the manner his book is wrote,) which is now looked upon as pedantry. Ant. à Wood was a great admirer of Mr. Burton, and of the books he bequeathed to the Bodleian library, a great many of which were little historicall diverting pamphlets, now grown wonderfull scarce, which Mr. Burton used to divert himself with, as he did with other little merry books, of which there are many in his benefaction, one of which is *The History of Tom Thumb.*

Thomas Hearne, 1733-34, *Reliquiæ Hearnianæ*, ed. Bliss, Jan. 28, vol. III, p. 115

The Anatomy of Melancholy (1621)

'Tis a book so full of variety of reading, that gentlemen who have lost their time and put to a push for invention, may furnish themselves with matter for common or scholastical discourse and writing. Several authors have unmercifully stolen matter from the said book without any acknowledgment.

Anthony Wood, 1691-1721, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, vol. I, f. 628

If you never saw Burton upon Melancholy, printed 1676, pray look into it, and read the ninth page of his Preface, "Democritus to the Reader." There

is something there which touches the point we are upon; but I mention the author to you, as the pleasantest, the most learned, and the most full of sterling sense. The wits of Queen Anne's reign, and the beginning of George the First, were not a little beholden to him.

Thomas Herring, 1728-57, *Letters to William Duncombe*

Jan. 23. No book sold better formerly than Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy,* in which there is great variety of learning, so that it hath been a common-place for filchers. It hath a great many impressions, and the bookseller got an estate by it; but now 'tis disregarded, and a good fair perfect copy (altho' of the 7th impression) may be purchased for one shilling, well bound, which occasion'd a gentleman yesterday (who observ'd how many books, that were topping books formerly, and were greedily bought at great prices, were turn'd to wast paper) to say, that sir Issac Newton he believ'd, would also in time be turned to wast paper; an observation which is very likely to prove true.

Thomas Hearne, 1733-34, *Reliquiæ Hearnianæ,* vol. III, p. 113

He compiled *The Anatomy of Melancholy,* a book which has been universally read and admired. The work is, for the most part, what the author himself styles it "a Cento;" but it is a very ingenious one. His quotations, which abound in every page, are pertinent; but if he had made more use of his invention, and less of his common-place book, his work would perhaps have been more valuable than it is. He is generally free from the affected language, and ridiculous metaphors, which disgrace most of the books of his time.

James Granger, 1769-1824, *Biographical History of England,* vol. II, p. 70

It will be no detraction from the power of Milton's original genius and invention, to remark, that he seems to have borrowed the subject of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso,* together with some particular thoughts, expressions, and rhymes, more especially the idea of a contrast between these two dispositions, from a forgotten poem prefixed to the first edition of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy,* entitled, "The Author's Abstract of Melancholy; or, A Dialogue between Pleasure and Pain." Here pain is Melancholy. It was written, as I conjecture, about the year 1600. I will make no apology for abstracting and citing as much of this poem as will be sufficient to prove, to a discerning reader, how far it had taken possession of Milton's mind. The measure will appear to be the same; and that our author was at least an attentive reader of Burton's book, may be already concluded from the traces of resemblance which I have incidentally noticed in passing

through the *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. . . . As to the very elaborate work to which these visionary verses are no unsuitable introduction, the writer's variety of learning, his quotations from scarce and curious books, his pedantry sparkling with rude wit and shapeless elegance, miscellaneous matter, intermixture of agreeable tales and illustrations, and, perhaps, above all, the singularities of his feelings, clothed in an uncommon quaintness of style, have contributed to render it, even to modern readers, a valuable repository of amusement and information.

Thomas Warton, 1785, ed. *Milton's Poems on several Occasions*, p. 94

The book, in my opinion, most useful to a man who wishes to acquire the reputation of being well read, with the least trouble, is Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, the most amusing and instructive medley of quotations and classical anecdotes I ever perused. But a superficial reader must take care, or his intricacies will bewilder him. If, however, he has patience to go through his volumes, he will be more improved for literary conversation than by the perusal of any twenty other works with which I am acquainted, —at least in the English language.

Lord Byron, 1807, *Life, Letters and Journals*, ed. Moore, p. 48

After all, we know little or nothing of the extraordinary author of this extraordinary production—which, it has been said, was the only work that could force Dr. Johnson from his bed two hours earlier than he wished to rise. This might have happened once—in his life: for Burton's book is, in a great measure, a *task* to peruse. You can scarcely travel through thirty pages, without taking at least a good long breathing pause. The multiplicity, the redundancy, the faint forced analogy, of the quotations—the utter absurdity of the physical illustrations—and the limited knowledge of pathology, are heavy clogs to a free and unrestrained perusal.

Thomas Frognall Dibdin, 1824, *The Library Companion*, p. 599, note

Mary bids me warn you not to read *The Anatomy of Melancholy* in your present *low way*. You'll fancy yourself a pipkin or a headless bear, as Burton speaks of. You'll be lost in a maze of remedies for a labyrinth of diseasements—a plethora of cures.

Charles Lamb, 1826, *Letter to J. B. Dibdin, Letters*, ed. Ainger, vol. II

The book was, in truth, no mere literary feat, but the genuine counterpart, in a strange literary form, of a mind as unusual. Burton's place is in that

extraordinary class of humorists, of which, in modern times, Rabelais, Swift, and Jean Paul are, though with obvious mutual differences, the other best known examples.

David Masson, 1858, *The Life of John Milton,* vol. I, ch. vi

As a writer, Burton ranks, in some points, with Montaigne, and in others with Sir Thomas Browne. His resembles the first in simplicity, *bonhommie,* and miscellaneous learning, and the other in rambling manner, quaint phraseology, and fantastic imagination. Neither of the three could be said to write books, but they accumulated vast storehouses, whence thousands of volumes might be, and have been compiled. There is nothing in Burton so low as in many of the *Essays* of Montaigne, but there is nothing so lofty as in passages of Browne's *Religio Medici* and *Urn-Burial.* Burton has been a favourite quarry to literary thieves, among whom Sterne, in his *Tristram Shandy,* stands pre-eminent.

George Gilfillan, 1860, ed., *Specimens of the Less-Known British Poets,* vol. I, p. 267

It is an extraordinary accumulation of out-of-the-way learning, interspersed, somewhat in the manner of Montaigne's *Essays,* with original matter, but with this among other differences,—that in Montaigne the quotations have the air of being introduced, as we know that in fact they were, to illustrate the original matter, which is the web of the discourse, they but the embroidery; whereas in Burton the learning is rather the web, upon which what he has got to say of his own is worked in by way of forming a sort of decorative figure. Burton is far from having the variety or abundance of Montaigne; but there is considerable point and penetration in his style, and he says many striking things in a sort of half-splenetic, half-jocular humor, which many readers have found wonderfully stimulating.

George L. Craik, 1861, *A Compendious History of English Literature and of the English Language,* vol. I, p. 618

An ecclesiastic and university recluse, who passed his life in libraries, and dabbled in all the sciences, as learned as Rabelais, of an inexhaustible and overflowing memory; unequal, moreover, gifted with enthusiasm, and spasmodically gay, but as a rule sad and morose, to the extent of confessing in his epitaph that melancholy made up his life and his death; in the first place original, enamoured of his own intelligence, and one of the earliest models of that singular English mood which, withdrawing man within himself, develops in him, at one time imagination, at another scrupulousness, at another oddity, and makes of him, according to circumstances, a poet, and eccentric, a humorist, a madman, or a puritan. He read on for thirty years,

put an encyclopædia into his head, and now, to amuse and relieve himself, takes a folio of blank paper. Twenty lines of a poet, a dozen lines of a treatise on agriculture, a folio column of heraldry, the patience, the record of the fever fits of hypochondria, the history of the particle *que*, a scrap of metaphysics,—this is what passes through his brain in a quarter of an hour: it is a carnival of ideas and phrases, Greek, Latin, German, French, Italian, philosophical, geometrical, medical, poetical, astrological, musical, pedagogic, heaped one on the other; an enormous medley, a prodigious mass of jumbled quotations, jostling thoughts with the vivacity and the transport of a feast of unreason.

H. A. Taine, 1871, *History of English Literature*, tr. Van Laun, vol. I, bk. ii, ch. i, p. 209

One of the most fascinating books in literature. . . . Commonplace writers have described the *Anatomy* as a mere collection of quotations, a piece of patchwork. The description is utterly untrue. On every page is the impress of a singularly deep and original genius. As a humorist Burton bears some resemblance to Sir Thomas Browne; the vein of semi-serious humor is, to his admirers, one of the chief attractions of his style.

A. H. Bullen, 1886, *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. VIII, pp. 12, 14

Burton occupied rather more than twenty years, from the time of his election to a position of learned ease, in shaping his book for its first appearance in 1621: he spent rather less than another twenty in refashioning and perfecting the work. Frequently as it has been reprinted, no attempt has ever yet been made to execute a critical edition, indicating the variations which were thus introduced by him on the four occasions when reissues were called for in his own lifetime.These alterations and additions are very numerous and very considerable, and the author not unfrequently draws attention to them in the text. But he has never, in making them, broken through the singular unity and control of treatment which the book shows. As far as the *minutiæ* of style are concerned, Burton's characteristics are well marked, and not very numerous. His method of quotation obliges him of neccessity to immense sentences, or rather clauseheaps. But it is noteworthy that when he intermits citation and narrates or argues in his own person he is less, not more, given than his contemporaries to the long sentence, and frequently has a distinctly terse and crisp arrangement of the members of his paragraph.

George Saintsbury, 1893, *English Prose*, ed. Craik, vol. II, p. 116

It is in his consolatory chapters that Burton's true worth shines forth, and compels his admiration. He is here no longer the disappointed, churlish

cynic, nor does he in these pages, as he often seems to do elsewhere, exhibit a longing, Paracelsus-like, to save mankind, while he yet tramples on it, but, throwing off his ill-fitting disguise, shows himself the good honest fellow he really is—a comforter of the distressed, a sympathiser with the afflicted, a compassionate friend, a true, staunch champion of the oppressed and sorrowful.

Edward W. Adams, 1896, "Robert Burton," *Gentleman's Magazine,* vol. 281, p. 53

PHILIP MASSINGER
1583-1640

Born, at Salisbury, 1583; baptized 24 Nov. Possibly page to Earl of Pembroke in boyhood, Matric., St. Alban Hall, Oxford, 14 May 1602. Left Oxford, 1606; took no degree. To London; took to writing plays. Collaborated with Nathaniel Field, Cyril Tourner, Daborne and others; with Fletcher, 1613-25. Wrote plays for King's Company of Players, 1616-23, 1625-40; for Queen's Company, 1623-25. Married. Died, suddenly, in London, March 1640; buried, in St. Saviour's, Southwark, 18 March. *Works: The Virgin Martir* (with T. Dekker), 1622; *The Duke of Millaine,* 1623; *The Bondman,* 1624; *The Roman Actor,* 1629; *The Picture,* 1630; *The Renegado,* 1630; *The Emperor of the East,* 1632; *The Maid of Honour,* 1632; *The Fatal Dowry* (with N. Field; anon.), 1632; *A New Way to Pay Old Debts,* 1633; *The Great Duke of Florence,* 1636; *The Unnaturall Combat,* 1639; (Several plays known to been printed are lost.) POSTHUMOUS: *Three new Playes; viz., The Bashful Lover, Guardian, Very Woman,* 1655; *The Old Law* (with Middleton and Rowley), 1656; *The City Madam,* 1658; *The Parliament of Love,* ed. by Gifford, 1805; *Believe as You List,* ed. for Percy Soc., 1849. COLLECTED WORKS: *ed.* by Coxeter (4 vols.), 1759; ed. by Monck Mason (4 vols.,) 1779; ed. by Gifford (4 vols.), 1805.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 190

SEE: *Ten Plays,* ed. Arthur Symons, 1887-89, 2v.; Thomas Dunn, *Massinger: The Man and the Playwright,* 1957.

PERSONAL

This day I searched the register of St. Saviour's, Southwark, by the playhouse then there, vulgo St. Mary's Overy's; and find Philip Massinger buryed March 18th, 1639. I am enformed at the place where he dyed, which was by the Bankes side neer the then playhouse, that he was buryed about the middle of the Bullhead-churchyard—i. e. that churchyard (for there are four) which is next the Bullhead taverne, from whence it has its denomina-

tion. He dyed about the 66th yeare of his age: went to bed well, and dyed suddenly—but not of the plague.

John Aubrey, 1669-96, *Brief Lives,* ed. Clark, vol. II, p. 55

As for our author Ph. Massinger, he made his last exit very suddenly, in his house on the Bank-side in Southwark, near to the then Play-House, for he went to bed well and was dead before morning. Whereupon his body, being accompanied by comedians, was buried about the middle of that Ch. Yard belonging to S. Saviours Church there, commonly called the Bull-head Ch. Yard, that is, in that which joyns to the Bull-head Tavern (for there are in all four yards belonging to that Church) on the 18 day of March in sixteen hundred thirty and nine.

Anthony Wood, 1691-1721, *Athenæ Oxonienses,* vol. I

Of his private life literally nothing can be said to be known, except that his dedications bespeaks incessant distress and dependence, while the recommendatory poems prefixed to his plays address him with attributes of virtue, which are seldom lavished with flattery or falsehood on those who are poor. . . . Of all his admirers only Sir Aston Cokayne dedicated a line to his memory. Even posterity did him long injustice: Rowe, who had discovered his merits in the depth of their neglect, forbore to be his editor, in the hopes of concealing his plagiarism from *The Fatal Dowry;* and he seemed on the eve of oblivion, when Dodsley's reprint of our old plays brought him faintly into that light of reputation, which has been made perfectly distinct by Mr. Gifford's edition of his works.

Thomas Campbell, 1819, *Specimens of the British Poets*

The Maid of Honour (1632)

I think, that he really shows, by the best means in his power, a strong sense of the dignity of womanhood, and that his catastrophe is more satisfactory than the violent death or the consignment to an inferior lover which would have commended themselves to most Elizabethan dramatists.

Leslie Stephen, 1874-79, *Hours in a Library,* vol. II, p. 169

The Maid of Honour is beyond doubt to be reckoned among Massinger's most attractive productions and those best according with the bent of his own nature. The comic character of "Signior Sylli, a foolish self-lover," is at the same time unusually diverting, especially in his references to his family traditions. The Page is a specimen of a type for which Massinger had a special predilection.

Adolphus William Ward, 1875-99, *A History of English Dramatic Literature,* vol. III, p. 20

I was so enchanted with these plays of Massinger's, but more especially with the one called *The Maid of Honor,* that I never rested till I had obtained from the management its revival on the stage. The part of Camiola is the only one that I ever selected for myself. *The Maid of Honor* succeeded on its first representation, but failed to attract audiences. Though less defective than most of the contemporaneous dramatic compositions, the play was still too deficient in interest to retain the favor the public. The character of Camiola is extremely noble and striking, but that of her lover so unworthy of her that the interest she excites personally fails to inspire one with sympathy for her passion for him. The piece in this respect has a sort of moral incoherency, which appears to me, indeed, not an infrequent defect in the compositions of these great dramatic pre-Shakespearites.

Frances Ann Kemble, 1878, *Records of a Girlhood,* p. 255

The New Way to Pay Old Debts (1633)

It has been several times revived, particularly at Drury Lane, and since at Convent Garden, to assist Henderson, who performed sir Giles Overreach with judgment; but injudicious pruning always wounds a good tree, and this kind of stab did the reputation of Massinger sustain in both this case and in other cases.

Charles Dibdin, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage,* vol. III, p. 237

There is, it is true, one remarkable exception to the general weakness of Massinger's characters. The vigour with which Sir Giles Overreach is set forth has made him the one well-known figure in Massinger's gallery, and the *New Way to Pay Old Debts* showed, in consequence, more vitality than any of his other plays. Much praise has been given, and not more than enough, to the originality and force of the conception. The conventional miser is elevated into a great man by a kind of inverse heroism, and made terrible instead of contemptible. But it is equally plain that here, too, Massinger fails to project himself fairly into his villain. His rants are singularly forcible, but they are clearly what other people would think about him, not what he would really think, still less what he would say, of himself.

Leslie Stephen, 1874-79, *Hours in a Library,* vol. II, p. 165

His *New Way to pay Old Debts* is a very effective play, though in the reading far less interesting and pleasing than most of the others. Yet there are power and passion in it, even if the power be somewhat melodramatic, and the passion of an ignoble type. In one respect he was truly a poet—his conceptions of character were ideal; but his diction, though full of dignity and

never commonplace, lacks the charm of the inspired and inspiring word, the relief of the picturesque image that comes so naturally to the help of Fletcher.

James Russell Lowell, 1887-92, "Massinger and Ford," *The Old English Dramatists,* ed. Norton, p. 127

Has deservedly retained its popularity for theatrical purposes to our own day. Much of this popularity is due to the character of Sir Giles Overreach, whose prosperity and overthrow give just that kind of dramatic satisfaction which is wanting in most of the later Elizabethan plays. The old miser, watching with grim satisfaction the victims struggling in the meshes of his net, is a powerfully drawn and intensely living personality. Overreach's madness is too incidental to be an adequate close to the drama, the general moral purpose of which is set forth in Lord Lovel's speech.

J. Howard B. Masterman, 1897, *The Age of Milton,* p. 75

General

Notwithstanding my partiality for this kind of reading, and some pains I had taken to gratify it, I never heard of Massinger till about two years ago, when a friend of mine, who knew my inclination, lent me a copy of his works!

John Monck Mason, 1779, ed. *Massinger*

Massinger had not the higher requisites of his art in anything like the degree in which they were possessed by Ford, Webster, Tourneur, Heywood, and others. He never shakes or disturbs the mind with grief. He is read with composure and placid delight. He wrote with that equability of all the passions, which made his English style the purest and most free from violent metaphors and harsh constructions, of any of the dramatists who were his contemporaries.

Charles Lamb, 1808, *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare*

The fame of Massinger has lately been revived by an edition of his works. Some literary men wish to rank him above Beaumont and Fletcher, as if he had approached more closely to the excellence of Shakspeare. I cannot find this. He appears to me to have the greatest resemblance to Beaumont and Fletcher in the plan of the pieces, in the tone of manners, and even in the language and negligences of versification. I would not undertake to decide, from internal symptoms, whether a play belonged to Massinger, or Beaumont and Fletcher.

Augustus William Schlegel, 1809, *Dramatic Art and Literature,* Lecture xiii, tr. Black, p. 392

With regard to Massinger, observe, 1. The vein of satire on the times; but this is not as in Shakspere, where the natures evolve themselves according to their incidental disproportions, from excess, deficiency, or mislocation, of one or more of the component elements; but is merely satire on what is attributed to them by others. 2. His excellent metre—a better model for dramatists in general to imitate than Shakspere's,—even if a dramatic taste existed in the frequenters of the stage, and could be gratified in the present size and management, or rather mismanagement, of the two patent theatres. I do not mean that Massinger's verse is superior to Shakspere's or equal to it. Far from it; but it is much more easily constructed and may be more successfully adopted by writers in the present day. It is the nearest approach to the language of real life at all compatible with a fixed metre. . . . I like Massinger's comedies better than his tragedies, although where the situation requires it, he often rises into the truly tragic and pathetic. He excels in narration, and for the most part displays his mere story with skill. But he is not a poet of high imagination; he is like a Flemish painter, in whose delineations objects appear as they do in nature, have the same force and truth, and produce the same effect upon the spectator.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1818, *Notes on Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher and Massinger,* ed. Ashe, p. 403, 406

Massinger makes an impression by hardness and repulsiveness of manner. In the intellectual processes which he delights to describe, "reason panders will"; he fixes arbitrarily on some object which there is no motive to pursue, or every motive combined against it, and then by screwing up his heroes or heroines to the deliberate and blind accomplishment of this, thinks to arrive at "the true pathos and sublime of human life." That is not the way. He seldom touches the heart or kindles the fancy. It is in vain to hope to excite much sympathy with convulsive efforts of the will, or intricate contrivances of the understanding, to obtain that which is better left alone, and where the interest arises principally from the conflict between the absurdity of the passion and the obstinacy with which it is persisted in. For the most part, his villains are a sort of *lusus naturæ;* his impassioned characters are like drunkards or madmen. Their conduct is extreme and outrageous, their motives unaccountable and weak; their misfortunes are without necessity, and their crimes without temptation, to ordinary apprehensions. I do not say that this is invariably the case in all Massinger's scenes, but I think it will be found that a principle of playing at cross-purposes is the ruling passion throughout most of them.

William Hazlitt, 1820, *Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth,* p. 131

There can be no doubt that Massinger admired and studied Shakspeare. In the haste of composition, his mind turned up many thoughts and phrases of the elder writer, in a more or less perfect state of preservation, but he was neither a plagiarist nor an imitator. His style, conduct, characterization, and metre, are perfectly distinct. No serious dramatist of the age owed Shakspeare so little. . . . Massinger's excellence—a great and beautiful excellence it is—was in the expression of virtue, in its probation, its strife, its victory. He could not, like Shakspeare, invest the perverted will with the terrors of a magnificent intellect, or bestow the cestus of poetry on simple unconscious loveliness.

Hartley Coleridge, 1840, *The Dramatic Works of Massinger and Ford,* Introduction, pp. xlviii, liv.

The reader who peruses Massinger can hardly fail to be charmed with the force and chaste elegance of his language, happily yet sparingly enriched with choice classical allusions, and none of his contemporaries knew so well the art of developing his plot in such a way as to surprise and delight the spectator, while meting out strict poetical justice to all. His declamatory speeches are very fine models of their kind; and some of his characters, especially his females, are elaborated with great care. Massinger's style and versification are strongly marked with his own peculiar manner; yet so little is that manner known, even to professed scholars, that in most of the current manuals and books of "specimens," a scene from *The Virgin Martyr,* undoubtedly written by Decker, is given as an example of his brother poet's composition!

James Hain Friswell, 1869, *Essays on English Writers,* p. 160

Nothing exemplifies more curiously the rapidity of development in poetical literature at the opening of the seventeenth century than the fact that the same brief reign which saw the last perfection placed on the edifice of Elizabethan drama saw also the products of the pen of Massinger. For, however much we may respect the activity of this remarkable man, however warmly we may acknowledge the power of his invention, the skill and energy with which he composed, and however agreeable his plays may appear to us if we compare them with what succeeded them in a single generation, there can be no question that the decline in the essential parts of poetry from Webster or Tourneur, to go no further back, to Massinger is very abrupt. Mr. Leslie Stephen has noted in this playwright "a certain hectic flush, symptomatic of approaching decay," and we may even go further and discover in him a leaden pallor, the sign of decreasing vitality. The "hectic flush" seems to me to belong more properly to his immediate successors, who do not come within the scope of this volume, to Ford, with his morbid

sensibility, and to Shirley, with his mechanical ornament, than to Massinger, where the decline chiefly shows itself in the negation of qualities, the absence of what is brilliant, eccentric, and passionate. The sentimental and rhetorical drama of Massinger has its excellent points, but it is dominated by the feeling that the burning summer of poetry is over, and that a russet season is letting us down gently towards the dull uniformity of winter. Interesting and specious as Massinger is, we cannot avoid the impression that he is preparing us for that dramatic destitution which was to accompany the Commonwealth.

Edmund Gosse, 1894, *The Jacobean Poets,* p. 202

THOMAS HEYWOOD

1575?-1641?

Born, in Lincolnshire, 1575 [?]. Probably educated at Peterhouse, Camb. A member of Henslowe's company of players; of Earl of Southampton's company; and of Earl of Worcester's (afterwards the Queen's) company. Voluminous writer of plays. Translated several Latin classical works. Died, 1641(?). WORKS: *If you know not me, you know nobody* (2 pts.), 1606; *A Woman kilde with Kindnesse,* 1607; *The Fair Maid of the Exchange* (anon.), 1607; *The Rape of Lucrece,* 1608; *Troia Britannica,* 1609; *The Golden Age,* 1611; *An Apology for Actors,* 1612; *A Funeral Elegy on the Death of Prince Henry,* 1613; *The first and second parts of King Edward the Fourth* (anon.), 1613; *A Marriage Triumph,* on the Nuptials of the Prince Palatine, 1613; *The Silver Age,* 1613; *The Brazen Age,* 1613; *The Four Prentices of London,* 1615; *The Captives,* 1624; Γυναικειον, 1624; *England's Elizabeth,* 1631; *The Fair Maid of the West,* 1631; *Eromena,* 1632; *The Iron Age,* 1632; *The English Traveller,* 1633; *A Maidenhead Well Lost,* 1634; *The Late Lancashire Witches* (with R. Brome), 1634; *The Hierarchy of the Blessed Angels,* 1635; *Philocothonista,* 1635; *Love's Maistresse,* 1636; *A Challenge for Beauty,* 1636; *The Royall King,* 1637; *A True Description of His Majesty's Royal Ship,* 1637; *A Curtain Lecture* (under initials: T. H.), 1637; *Pleasant Dialogues and Dramas,* 1637; *The Royal King and the Loyal King,* 1637; *Porta Pietatis,* 1638; *The Wise Woman of Hogsdon,* 1638; *Londini Status Placatus,* 1639; *The Exemplary Lives . . . of Nine of the most worthy Women of the World,* 1640; *The Life of Merlin,* 1641; *Machiavel* (anon.), 1641; *Fortune by Land and Sea* (with Rowley), 1655. He *translated: Two . . . notable Histories* of Sallust, 1608; and *edited:* Lydgate's *Life and Death of Hector,* 1614; Cooke's *Greene's Tu Quoque,* 1622; Sir R. Barckley's *Felicitie of Man,* 1631; Marlowe's *Jew of Malta,* 1633. COLLECTED WORKS: in 6 vols., with memoir, 1874 [ed. R. H. Shepherd].

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 132

SEE: Arthur M. Clark, *Thomas Heywood: Playwright and Miscellanist,* 1931.

PERSONAL

Md. that this 25 of marche 1598, Thomas Hawoode came and hiered hime seallfe with me as a covenante searvante for ij yeares, by the Recevinge of ij synell pence, acordinge to the statute of winchester, and to begine at the daye above written, and not to playe any wher publicke abowt London not whille thes ij yeares be exspired, but in my howsse: yf he do, then he dothe forfette unto me, by the Recevinge of these ij[d], fortie powndes, and wittnes to this

Antony Monday, Wm. Borne,
Gabrell Spencer, Thoms Dowton,
Robart Shawe, Richard Jonnes,
Richard Alleyn.

Philip Henslowe, 1598, *Diary*, ed. Collier, p. 260

An Author that liv'd in the Time of Queen *Elizabeth*, and the Reign of King *James* the First. Tho' he were but an Actor, as is manifest by Mr. *Kirkman's* Testimony, and apparent from a Piece writ by him, call'd "The Actors Vindication"; yet his Plays were in those Days accounted of the Second-Rate. He was the most Voluminous Writer that ever handled Dramatick Poetry in our Language; and I know none but the Famous "Spaniard, Lopez de Vega," that can vye with him; if at least we give Credit to his own Attestation, in the Preface to One of his Plays.

Gerard Langbaine, 1691, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, p. 256

Little as we know of his life, his dedications and prefaces make us better acquainted with his personality than we are with that of much more famous men.

George Saintsbury, 1887, *History of Elizabethan Literature*, p. 284

A Woman Killed with Kindness (1603-7)

Heywood is a sort of *prose* Shakespeare. His scenes are to the full as natural and affecting. But we miss *the poet*, that which in Shakespeare always appears out and above the surface of *the nature*. Heywood's characters in this play, for instance, his country gentlemen, &c., are exactly what we see, but of the best kind of what we see in life. Shakespeare makes us believe, while we are among his lovely creations, that they are nothing but what we are familiar with, as in dreams new things seem old; but we awake, and sigh for the difference.

Charles Lamb, 1808, *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare*

The language is not much raised above that of comedy; but we can hardly rank a tale of guilt, sorrow, and death, in that dramatic category. It may be read with interest and approbation at this day; being quite free from extravagance either in manner or language, the besetting sin of our earlier dramatists, and equally so from buffoonery. The subject resembles that of Kotzebue's drama, *The Stranger,* but is managed with a nobler tone of morality. It is true that Mrs. Frankfort's immediate surrender to her seducer, like that of Beaumelé in *The Fatal Dowry,* makes her contemptible; but this, though it might possibly have originated in the necessity created by the narrow limits of theatrical time, has the good effect of preventing that sympathy with her guilt which is reserved for her penitence.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe,* pt. ii, ch. vi, par. 33

The play, therefore, was finished when Henslowe paid £3 for it; and we may conclude, perhaps, that the "black satin suit" was worn by the hero after the fall of his wife, and when she was dying, in consequence of the undeserved tenderness with which she had been treated by her forgiving husband. Nothing can be more tragically touching than the whole of this part of this fine moral play, and we are not ashamed to own, after having read it many times previously, that we could not go through the mechanical process of correcting the proofs, without a degree of emotion that almost disqualified us for the duty.

John Payne Collier, 1850, ed., *A Woman Killed With Kindness,* Introduction, p. viii

His masterpiece, *The Woman Killed with Kindness* (in which a deceived husband, coming to the knowledge of his shame, drives his rival to repentance, and his wife to repentance and death, by his charity), is not wholly admirable. Shakespere would have felt, more fully than Heywood, the danger of presenting his hero as something of a wittol without sufficient passion of religion or affection to justify his tolerance. But the pathos is so great, the sense of "the pity of it" is so simply and unaffectedly rendered, that it is impossible not to rank Heywood very high.

George Saintsbury, 1887, *History of Elizabethan Literature,* p. 280

In the centre of the choir, but quite invisible, stands the figure of Thomas Heywood, a voluble secondary writer in the class of Shakespeare and Fletcher, claiming "an entire hand, or at least a main finger" in no fewer than 220 plays. He is remarkable chiefly for a pleasing mediocrity in picturesqueness, a prosaic, even spirit of flowing romance. Heywood rises

once to real force of emotion in the naked, sombre atonement of *A Woman Killed with Kindness.*

Edmund Gosse, 1897, *Short History of Modern English Literature,* p. 118

General

But tho' many of these Plays being written loosely in Taverns as Mr. *Kirkman* observes, might occasion their being so mean; yet it did not in probability much contribute to their loss, as Mr. *Winstanley* would have it. To do our Author justice, I cannot allow that his Plays are so mean as Mr. *Kirkman* has represented them: for he was a general Scholar, and an indifferent Linguist, as his several Translations from *Lucian, Erasmus, Textor, Beza, Buchanan,* and other Latine and Italian *Authors,* sufficiently manifest. Nay, further in several of his Plays he has borrow'd many Ornaments from the Ancients; as more particularly in his Plays call'd *The Ages,* he has intersperst several Things, borrow'd from *Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Seneca, Plautus, &c.,* which extreamly set them off.

Gerard Langbaine, 1691, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets,* p. 258

The prodigious quantity he wrote, for which he ransacked the ancients without mercy, whatever might have been his real merit had he taken time to correct and polish his works, rendered it impossible for him to turn any thing out of hand likely to secure him a solid reputation; and thus we have a list of twenty-four pieces, out of two hundred and twenty which he himself says he either wrote or was concerned in, little more known at this moment than by their titles.

Charles Dibdin, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage,* vol. III, p. 106

If I were to be consulted as to a Reprint of our Old English Dramatists, I should advise to begin with the collected Plays of Heywood. He was a fellow Actor, and fellow Dramatist, with Shakespeare. He possessed not the imagination of the latter; but in all those qualities which gained for Shakespeare the attribute of *gentle,* he was not inferior to him. Generosity, courtesy, temperance in the depths of passion; sweetness, in a word, and gentleness; Christianism; and true hearty Anglicism of feelings, shaping that Christianism; shine throughout his beautiful writings in a manner more conspicuous than in those of Shakespeare, but only more conspicuous, inasmuch as in Heywood these qualities are primary, in the other subordinate

to poetry. I love them both equally, but Shakespeare has most of my wonder. Heywood should be known to his countrymen, as he deserves. His plots are almost invariably English. I am sometimes jealous, that Shakespeare laid so few of his scenes at home.

Charles Lamb, 1808, *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare*

It would grieve me to seem unjust towards a writer to whom I have long felt very specially attracted—and this by no means only because of a pious although perhaps more or less apocryphal bond. Yet the highest praise which it seems right to bestow upon Thomas Heywood is that which was happily expressed by Tieck when he described him as "the model of a light and rapid talent." Carried, it may be, by fortune or by choice from the tranquil court of Peterhouse to a very different scene of intellectual effort, he worked during a long and laborious life with an energy in itself deserving of respect, and manifestly also with a facility attesting no ordinary natural endowment. His creative power was, however, of that secondary order which is content with accommodating itself to conditions imposed by the prevailing tastes of the day. It may be merely his 'prentice hand that he tried on a dramatic reproduction of chronicles and popular story-books; but though even here the simplicity of his workmanship was due to a natural directness of touch by no means to be confounded with rudeness of hand, he cannot be said to have done much to revive a species which though still locally popular was already doomed to decay. . . . Of humour he had his share—or he would have been no master of pathos; but he cannot be said to have excelled in humorous characterisation; there is as a rule little individuality in his comic figures at large, and his clowns, although good examples of their kind, are made to order. Indeed, the inferior sort of wit—which of all writers dramatists most readily acquire as a literary accomplishment—his practised inventiveness displays with the utmost abundance; of all the Elisabethan playwrights he is one of the most unwearied, and to my mind one of the most intolerable punsters. In outward form he is nearly as Protean as in choice of subject and of treatment; his earlier plays more especially abound with rimes; in general, fluent verse and easy prose are freely intermixed. But—apart from the pathetic force of particular passages and scenes, and a straightforward naturalness which lends an irresistible charm to a writer as it does to a friend in real life—his strength lies in a dramatic insight which goes far towards the making of a master of the playwright's art, while it has undoubtedly been possessed by some not entitled to rank as dramatic poets.

Adolphus William Ward, 1875-99, *A History of English Dramatic Literature,* vol. II, pp. 585, 586

As a historical or mythological playwright, working on material derived from classic legends or from English annals, he shows signs now and then, as occasion offers, of the sweet tempered manliness, the noble kindliness, which won the heart of Lamb: something too there is in these plays of his pathos, and something of his humour: but if this were all we had of him we should know comparatively little of what we now most prize in him. Of this we find most in the plays dealing with English life in his own day: but there is more of it in his romantic tragi-comedies than in his chronicle histories or his legendary compilations and variations on the antique. . . . He is English of the English in his quiet, frank, spontaneous expression, suppression is no longer either possible or proper, of all noble and gentle and natural emotion. . . . His prose, if never to be called masterly, may generally be called good and pure: its occasional pedantries and pretentions are rather signs of the century than faults of the author: and he can tell a story, especially a short story, as well if not better than many a better-known writer. I fear, however, that it is not the poetical quality of his undramatic verse which can ever be said to make it worth reading: it is, as far as I know, of the very homeliest homespun ever turned out by the very humblest of workmen. His poetry, it would be pretty safe to wager, must be looked for exclusively in his plays: but there, if not remarkable for depth or height of imagination or of passion, it will be found memorable for unsurpassed excellence of unpretentious elevation in treatment of character.

Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1895, "The Plays of Thomas Heywood," *The Nineteenth Century*, vol. 38, p. 397, 402, 410

SIR JOHN SUCKLING
1609-1642

Sir John Suckling (1609-42), poet, was born at Whitton in Middlesex, the son of a secretary of state to James I. In 1623 he entered Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1628 went on his travels, and served for some time under Gustavus Adolphus. He returned about 1632, became famous at court for his wit and prodigality, and in 1639 raised a troop of 100 horse to aid the king against the Scots. Suckling was returned to the Long Parliament, joined in the abortive plot to rescue Strafford from the Tower, and in more desperate plots still against the liberties of the kingdom, but his schemes being discovered ,fled to the Continent. Impoverished and disgraced, he almost certainly poisoned himself at Paris. The works of Suckling consist of four plays, *Aglaura, The Goblins, Brennoralt,* and *The Sad One,* now forgotten; a prose treatise, *An Account of Religion by Reason;* a few *Letters;* and a series of miscellaneous poems, beginning with *A Session of the Poets* (1637), which is happily descriptive of the author's contemporaries. But the fame of Suckling rests on his ballads and songs such as the *Ballad upon a Wedding* and "Why so pale and wan,

fond lover?". See the Rev. A. Suckling's *Selections, with a life* (1836), reproduced by W. C. Hazlitt (174; new ed. 1893); also the Memoir prefixed to F. A. Stokes's edition (New York, 1885).

Patrick and Groome, eds., 1897, *Chambers's Biographical Dictionary*, p. 891

SEE: *Poems*, ed. R. G. Howarth, 1931, repr. 1953; Herbert Berry, *Sir John Suckling's Poems and Letters from Manuscript*, 1961.

PERSONAL

Suckling next was called, but did not appear,
But straight one whispered Apollo i' th' ear,
That of all men living he cared not for 't,
He loved not the Muses so well as his sport.
And prized black eyes, or a lucky hit
At bowls, above all the trophies of wit;
But Apollo was angry, and publicly said,
'Twere fit that a fine were set upon 's head.

Sir John Suckling, 1637, *A Sessions of the Poets*

He was the greatest gallant of his time, and the greatest gamester, both for bowling and cards, so that no shopkeeper would trust him for 6*d*., as to-day, for instance, he might, by winning, be worth 200 *li*., the next day he might not be worth half so much, or perhaps be sometimes *minus nihilo*. Sir William [Davenant] (who was his intimate friend, and loved him intirely) would say that Sir John, when he was at his lowest ebbe in gameing, I meane when unfortunate, then would make himselfe most glorious in apparell, and sayd that it exalted his spirits, and that he had then best luck when he was most gallant, and then his spirits were highest. . . . He was of middle stature and slight strength, brisque round eie, reddish fac't and red nose (ill liver), his head not very big, his hayre a kind of sand colour; his beard turnd-up naturally, so that he had brisk and gracefull looke. He died a batchelour. . . . Sir John Suckling—from Mr. William Beeston—invented the game of cribbidge.

John Aubrey, 1669-96, *Brief Lives*, ed. Clark, vol. II, pp. 240, 242, 245

He had so pregnant a Genius that he spoke *Latin* at Five Years Old, and writ it at Nine Years of Age. His Skill in Languages, and *Musick*, was Remarkable; but above all his *Poetry*, took with all the People, whose Souls were polished by the Charms of the *Muses*: And tho' *War* did not so well agree with his Constitution; yet in his Travels he made a Campaign under the Famous *Gustavus*, where he was present at three Battles, five Sieges,

and as many Skirmishes: and if his Valour was not so Remarkable, in the North in the beginning of the Wars; yet his Loyalty was conspicuous, by his Expence in the Troop of Horse, which he rais'd, whose Equipage, *viz.* Horses, Arms and Clothes, were provided all at his own Charge, and stood him in 12000 *l.*

Gerard Langbaine, 1691, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets,* p. 496

The active life of our poet was now drawing rapidly towards its closing scene. Time, as it rolled in its unceasing course, brought no prospect of a national reunion, while the interdict against his safety continued in full validity. Reduced, at length, in fortune, and dreading to encounter poverty, which his habits and temper were little calculated to endure—hurled from his rank in society—an alien, and perhaps friendless—his energies at length gave way to the complicated wretchedness of his situation, and he contemplated an act which he had himself condemned in others. Purchasing poison of an apothecary at Paris, he produced death, says Aubrey, by violent fits of vomiting. Some writers, with great tenderness to his character, have attributed his end to other causes and dissimilar means; but, I regret to add, family tradition confirms the first and most revolting narration.

Alfred Suckling, 1836-74, ed., *Suckling's Works*

Considering the early age at which he passed away, and what he has left behind him in print, not to name his political exploits, it will be allowed, no doubt, that Suckling was a man of no ordinary genius, nor have we it in our power, we apprehend, to raise a better monument to him, than a faithful text of his authentic writings.

W. Carew Hazlitt, 1874, ed., *Poems, Plays and Other Romances of Suckling,* Introduction, vol. I, p. vi

General

Among the highest and most refined wits of the nation, this gentle and princely poet took his generous rise from the Court, where, having flourished with splendour and reputation, he lived only long enough to see the sunset of that majesty from whose auspicious beams he derived his lustre, and with whose declining state his own loyal fortunes were obscured. But after the several changes of those times, being sequestered from the more serene contentments of his native country, he first took care to secure the dearest and choicest of his papers in the several cabinets of his noble and faithful friends, and among other testimonies of his worth, these elegant and florid pieces of his fancy were preserved in the custody of his truly honourable

and virtuous sister, with whose free permission they were transcribed, and now published exactly according to the originals. This might be sufficient to make you acknowledge that these are the real and genuine works of Sir John Suckling; but if you can yet doubt, let any judicious soul seriously consider the freedom of the fancy, richness of the conceipt, proper expression, with that air and spirit diffused through every part, and he will find such a perfect resemblance with what hath been formerly known, that he cannot with modesty doubt them to be his. I could tell you further (for I myself am the best witness of it), what a thirst and general inquiry hath been after what I here present you, by all that have either seen or heard of them. And by that time you have read them, you will believe me, who have, now for many years, anually published the productions of the best wits of our own and foreign nations.

Humphrey Moseley, 1646, *Suckling's Poems,* The Stationer to the Reader

Full of flowers, [*Aglaura*] but rather stuck in than growing there.

Richard Flecknoe, 1664, *Short Discourse on the English Stage*

For one who now reads anything of Carew there are twenty who know by heart some verses of his friend and brother-courtier, Sir John Suckling. His ballad upon a wedding, with the necessary omission of a verse or two, is in all our books of poetic extracts.

David Masson, 1858, *The Life of John Milton,* vol. I, ch. vi

Has none of the pathos of Lovelace or Carew, but he equals them in fluency and natural grace of manner, and he has besides a sprightliness and buoyancy which is all his own. His poetry has a more impulsive air than theirs; and while, in reference to the greater part of what he has produced, he must be classed along with them and Waller as an adherent to the French school of propriety and precision, some of the happiest of his effusions are remarkable for a cordiality and impetuosity of manner which has nothing foreign about it, but is altogether English, although there is not much resembling it in any of his predecessors any more than of his contemporaries, unless perhaps in some of Skelton's pieces. His famous ballad of *The Wedding* is the very perfection of gayety and archness in verse; and his *Session of the Poets,* in which he scatters about his wit and humor in a more careless style, may be considered as constituting him the founder of a species of satire, which Cleveland and Marvel and other subsequent writers carried into new applications, and which only expired among us with Swift.

George L. Craik, 1861, *A Compendious History of English Literature and of the English Language,* vol. II, p. 28

They turn eloquent phrases in order to be applauded, and flattering exaggerations in order to please. The divine faces, the serious or profound looks, the virgin or impassioned expressions which burst forth at every step in the early poets, have disappeared; here we see nothing but agreeable countenances, painted in agreeable verses. Blackguardism is not far off; we meet with it as early as in Suckling, and crudity to boot, and prosaic epicurism.

H. A. Taine, 1871, *English Literature,* tr. Van Laun, vol. I, bk. ii, ch. i, p. 201

Suckling—strange as it may appear to those who only know his career as a poet—wrote a brief religious treatise, entitled *An Account of Religion by Reason.* There is little of thought or genuine argument in the treatise. It is the work of an elegant *litterateur* handling a subject which he knows imperfectly, and only from the outside. But the mere fact is a testimony to the theological excitement which then everywhere pervaded society, and indicates the desire there must have been in many minds, besides those whose writings and speculations have come to the surface, to examine the subject of religion rationally. Suckling avows that he feared the charge of Socinianism in his undertaking.

John Tulloch, 1872, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy In England in the Seventeenth Century,* vol. I, p. 112

While it is true that Suckling is devoid of imagination—in the higher sense of that word—it is a little unjust to deny him the presence of sentiment. But when a writer cannot be a great dramatist, it is something to be a true lyric poet, and this distinction Suckling rightfully enjoys. There is no finer poem of its kind than the *Ballad upon a Wedding,* while many of the shorter pieces of this writer will compare favourably with the lyrics of Herrick and Waller. Many poets have written lyrics with ease and freedom; but Suckling cut cameos, and some of them are almost worthy of standing alone. . . . The poet was, in the first place, unequal to a great or extended conception; and in the second, lacked the power, which distinguishes the true dramatist, of giving breadth of treatment to such conceptions as he had. *Aglaura* is said to have been the poet's favourite drama. . . . *Aglaura* is studded with beautiful lines, and now and then there is even a sustained passage, but on the whole we are obliged to confess that the drama is stilted and unnatural. . . . His *Brennoralt* is generally regarded as his best dramatic work. . . . The versification of *Brennoralt* is almost as crude and halting as that of *Aglaura,* though, as a whole, the former must take precedence for its superior dramatic qualities. Yet the lyrics in *Aglaura* are far superior to those found in the later drama. Suckling's comedy of *The Goblins* need not detain us.

George Barnett Smith, 1878, "Sir John Suckling," *The Gentleman's Magazine,* vol. 243, pp. 431, 435, 437

A worse playwright is scarcely to be found, even in that miserable period, among the Gomersalls, Lowers, and Killigrews. *Aglaura,* a monster of tedious pageantry, was arranged with a tragic and a comic ending, according to choice: but this was not so unique as has been supposed, for we find the same silly contrivance in Howard's *Vestal Virgin* and in the *Pandora* of Sir William Killigrew. The only drama of Suckling's which is at all readable is *Brennoralt,* which is incoherent enough, but does contain some fine tragic writing. The only real merit of these plays however consists in the beautiful songs they harbour.

Edmund Gosse, 1880, *English Poets,* ed. Ward, vol. II, p. 171

In the garden of Suckling's verse, side by side with rare blossoms of delightful fragrance, grew unsightly and noisome weeds. Of course they were affected by their surroundings and by the unnatural light of his court and his time; but some of his writings outrage the taste or morality of to-day. He is, however, although not as widely read or known as he should be, one of the immortals in literature, and had he written nothing but *A ballad upon a Wedding* and the song beginning "Why so pale and wan, fond lover," he would have earned his immortality. Their simplicity, grace, and wit are unmatched and are peculiarly his own. Their flavor is most rare: it delights at once, and is never forgotten. The path which Suckling's verse takes never scales sublime heights, but runs through fields where music and laughter are heard, where beauty is seen, and where there are occasional stormy days. His imagination never awes, nor does his feeling stir us deeply; but his fancy pleases us, his wit and gayety provoke a smile, and his careless ease and grace charm us.

Frederick A. Stokes, 1886, ed., *The Poems of Sir John Suckling,* Preface, p. xiii

I admire Suckling's graceful audacity. It is luckier to do a little thing surpassingly well than a larger thing indifferently so.

Frederick Locker-Lampson, 1896, *My Confidences,* p. 181

FRANCIS QUARLES

1592-1644

Francis Quarles. An English sacred poet; born in Rumford, Essex, in 1592; died September 1644. He was educated at Cambridge, and studied for a lawyer. He received several appointments from the Crown, and finally held the position of city chronologer. His leading works were: *Emblems Divine and Moral* (1635); *Argalus and Parthenia* (1621); and

the *Enchiridion* (1640) in prose. Frequent fine expressions redeem much commonplace.

Charles Dudley Warner. 1897, ed., *Library of the World's Best Literature, Biographical Dictionary of Authors,* vol. XXIX, p. 447

SEE: *Complete Works in Prose and Verse,* ed. A. B. Grosart, 1880-81, 3 v. (limited edition).

Emblems Divine and Moral (1635)

Tinnit, inane est; with the picture of one ringing on the globe with his finger, is the best thing I have the luck to remember, in that great poet Quarles.

Alexander Pope, 1721-22, *Letter to Dr. Atterbury,* March 19

His *Emblems,* which have been serviceable to allure children to read, have been often printed, and are not yet forgotten. We sometimes stumble upon a pretty thought among many trivial ones in this book; and now and then meet with poetry in mechanism in the prints.

James Granger, 1769-1824, *Biographical History of England,* vol. III, p. 135

His best known work is his *Emblems,* through which a bitter melancholy vein runs, and in which the most extravagant notions on the misery of human life, and the sin and corruption of nature are to be found.

George G. Perry, 1861, *History of the Church of England,* vol. I, p. 648

These *Emblems* were illustrated in the first editions by most ridiculous prints; and yet, as Southey has noted, it is the prints that have been most popular, while the poems have been neglected. It is owing to both, however, that Quarles became so early what Philips, Milton's nephew, calls him, "the darling of our plebeian judgments." After the Restoration Quarles was completely forgotten, and Pope even gives him a place in the *Dunciad.* The better taste, or, as Campbell says, the more charitable criticism, of modern times has admitted him into "the laurelled fraternity of the poets," and he is now admired for his quaintness, vigour, and occasional beauty.

Joseph Angus, 1865, *The Handbook of English Literature,* p. 159

It is difficult to conceive of any poet who could produce verse of a high order of merit in close on a hundred and fifty short poems written to order on as many pictures; and the author of the *Emblems* has certainly written nothing that can be classed with the best of Crashaw or Vaughan. But he

has here kept a level of poetic excellence in his verse considerably above that to which it sometimes sank.

J. Howard B. Masterman, 1897, *The Age of Milton*, p. 117

General

Had he been contemporary with Plato (that great back-friend to Poets), he would not onely have allowed him to live, but advanced him to an office in his Commonwealth. Some Poets, if debarr'd profaness, wantoness, and satyricalness (that they may neither abuse God, themselves, nor their neighbours), have their tongues cut out in effect. Others onely trade in wit at the second hand, being all for translations, nothing for invention. Our Quarles was free from the faults of the first, as if he had drank of Jordan instead of Helicon, and slept on Mount Olivet for his Parnassus: and was happy in his own invention. His visible Poetry (I mean his *Emblems*) is excellent, catching therein the eye and fancy at one draught, so that he hath out-Alciated therein, in some men's judgement. His Verses on Job are done to the life, so that the Reader may see his sores, and through them the anguish of his soul.

Thomas Fuller, 1662, *Worthies of England*, ed. Nichols, vol. I, p. 354

I have been reading lately what of Quarles's poetry I could get. He was a contemporary of Herbert, and a kindred spirit. I think you would like him. It is rare to find one who was so much of a poet and so little of an artist. He wrote long poems, almost epics for length, about Jonah, Esther, Job, Samson, and Solomon, interspersed with meditations after a quite original plan,—Shepherd's Oracles, Comedies, Romancies, Fancies, and Meditations,—the quintessence of meditation,—and Enchiridions of Meditation all divine,—and what he calls his Morning Muse; besides prose works as curious as the rest. He was an unwearied Christian, and a reformer of some old school withal. Hopelessly quaint, as if he lived all alone and knew nobody but his wife, who appears to have reverenced him. He never doubts his genius; it is only he and his God in all the world. He uses language sometimes as greatly as Shakespeare; and though there is not much straight grain in him, there is plenty of tough, crooked timber. In an age when Herbert is revived, Quarles surely ought not to be forgotten.

Henry David Thoreau, 1843, *Letter to Mrs. Emerson, Familiar Letters*, ed. Sanborn, p. 134

As a poet he has been somewhat hardly dealt with; having been judged more by the evidence of his conceits, absurdities, and false taste, than by

his striking and original images, his noble and manly thoughts, and the exceeding fertility of his language. It is not surprising that posterity has failed to reverse the unjust judgment passed upon him by his contemporaries. . . . No writer is either more affected or more obscure. It is only by raking that we can gather the gold; yet it is such as will reward the seeker who has courage to undertake the search. His sagacity and good sense are unquestionable, and occasionally there is a rich outbreak of fancy; while at times he startles us by compressing, as it were, a volume into a single line.

Samuel Carter Hall, 1848, *Book of Gems*

Like Byrom in the next century, like not a few poets in the Middle Ages, Quarles was a kind of journalist to whom the vehicle of verse came more easily than the vehicle of prose, and the dangers of that state of things are well known. . . . All Quarles's work is journey-work, but it is only fair to note the frequent wealth of fancy, the occasional felicity of expression, which illustrate this wilderness. I should not like to be challenged to produce twenty good lines of his in verse or prose written consecutively, yet it might be a still more dangerous challenge to produce any journalist in verse or prose of the present day who has written so much, and in whom the occasional flashes—the signs of poetical power in the individual and of what may be called poetical atmosphere in his "surroundings"—are more frequent.

George Saintsbury, 1887, *History of Elizabethan Literature*, p. 378

The wretchedness of man's earthly existence was the main topic of Quarles' muse, and it was exclusively in religious circles that the bulk of his work has been welcomed with any enthusiasm. In his own day he found very few admirers among persons of literary cultivation, and critics of a later age treated his literary pretentions with contempt. Anthony á Wood sneered at him as "an old puritanicall poet . . . the sometime darling of our plebeian judgment." Phillips, in his *Theatrum Poetarum* (1675), wrote that his verses "have been ever, and still are, in wonderful veneration among the vulgar"; Pope who criticised his *Emblems* in detail in a letter to Atterbury, denounces the books in the *Dunciad* (bk. i. ii., 139-40) as one

Where the pictures for the page atone,
And Quarles is saved by beauties not his own.

Horace Walpole wrote that "Milton was forced to wait till the world had done admiring Quarles." But Quarles is not quite so contemptible as his seventeenth-and-eighteenth-century critics assumed. Most of his verse is diffuse and dull; he abounds in fantastic, tortuous and irrational conceits, and he often sinks into ludicrous bathos; but there is no volume of his verse which is not illumined by occasional flashes of poetic fire. Charles Lamb

was undecided whether to prefer him to Wither, and finally reached the conclusion that Quarles was the wittier writer, although Wither "lays more hold of the heart" (*Letters,* ed. Ainger, i., 95). Pope deemed Wither a better poet but a less honest man. Quarles's most distinguished admirer of the present century was the American writer, H. D. Thoreau, who asserted, not unjustly, that "he uses language sometimes as greatly as Shakespeare" (*Letters* 1865). Quarles's *Enchiridion,* his most popular prose work, contains many aphorisms forcibly expressed.

Sidney Lee, 1896, *Dictionary of National Biography,* vol. XLVII, p. 96

RICHARD CRASHAW
1613?-1649

Richard Crashaw, religious poet, was born in London about 1613, the only son of the Puritan poet and clergyman, William Crashaw, (1572-1626). From the Charterhouse he proceeded in 1631 to Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, and in 1637 became a fellow of Peterhouse. His Catholic leanings prevented him from receiving Anglican orders, and in 1644 he lost his fellowship for refusing to take the Covenant. He went to Paris, embraced Catholicism, and suffered great distress, until after 1646, through Cowley, he was introduced to Queen Henrietta Maria, who recommended him at Rome; and in April 1649 he became a sub-canon at Loretto, but died four months afterwards. In 1634 Crashaw published a volume of Latin poems *Epigrammatum Sacroium Liber* (2nd ed. 1670), in which occurs the famous line on the miracle at Cana: *"Nympha pudica Deum vidit et erubuit"* (the modest water saw its God and blushed); in 1646 appeared his *Steps to the Temple,* republished at Paris in 1652, under the title *Carmen deo Nostro,* with 12 vignette engravings designed by Crashaw. His works have been edited by Turnbull (1858), Grosart (1872), and Tutin (Hull, 1893).

Patrick and Groome, eds., 1897, *Chambers's Biographical Dictionary,* p. 258

SEE: *Works,* ed. L. C. Martin, 1927; Ruth C. Wallerstein, *Richard Crashaw: A Study in Style and Poetic Development,* 1935, repr. 1959; George W. Williams, *Image and Symbol in the Sacred Poetry of Richard Crashaw,* 1963.

PERSONAL

His faith perhaps in some nice tenets might
Be wrong; his life, I'm sure, was in the right.
And I myself a Catholic will be,
So far at least, great Saint, to pray to thee.

Hail bard triumphant! and some care bestow
On us, the poets militant below!
* * *
And when my Muse soars with so strong a wing,
'Twill learn of things divine, and first of thee, to sing.

Abraham Cowley, 1650, *On the Death of Mr. Crashaw*

Was Car then Crashawe; or was Crashawe Car,
Since both within one name combined are?
Yes, Car's Crawshawe, he Car; 'tis loue alone
Which melts two harts, of both composing one.
So Crashaw's still the same: so much desired
By strongest witts; so honor'd, so admired;
Car was but he that enter'd as a friend
With whom he shar'd his thoughtes, and did commend
(While yet he liu'd) this worke; they lou'd each other:
Sweete Crashawe was his friend; he Crashawe's brother.
So Car hath title then; 'twas his intent
That what his riches pen'd, poore Car should print;
Nor feares he checke, praysing that happie one
Who was belou'd by all; disprais'd by none:
To witt, being pleas'd with all things, he pleas'd all,
Nor would he giue, nor take offence.

Thomas Car, 1652, ed. *Carmen Deo Nostro*

If Crashaw was not generally popular, and if his detractors malignantly defamed him as a "small poet," a "slip of the times," and as a "peevish, silly seeker, who glided away from his principles in a poetical vein of fancy and an impertinent curiosity," he enjoyed, on the other hand, the praise of some applauded men, and a general "sweet savour" of renown in his day and generation. He is said to have been a universal scholar—versed in the Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Spanish, and Italian languages—to have made the Grecian and Roman poets his study—and to have possessed, besides, the accomplishments of music, drawing, engraving, and painting. In his habits, too, he was temperate to severity; indeed, had he not been so, his poetry would have sunk from a panegyric on God into a bitter, unintentional satire on himself.

George Gilfillan, 1857, ed. *The Poetical Works of Richard Crashaw*, p. vii

His position in history, his manhood spent in the last years of the reign of "Thorough," and in the very forefront of the crisis, give him a greater claim

upon us than Herbert, who died before Laud succeeded to the Primacy, or Vaughan, who was still a boy when Strafford was executed. There are many other points of view from which Crashaw is of special interest; his works present the only important contribution to English literature made by a pronounced Catholic, embodying Catholic doctrine, during the whole of the seventeenth century, while as a poet, although extremely unequal, he rises, at his best, to a mounting fervour which is quite electrical, and hardly rivalled in its kind before or since. Nor is the story of his life, brief and vague though its outline may be, unworthy of having inspired, as it has evidently done, that noble romance of *John Inglesant* which all the world has been reading with so much curiosity and delight.

Edmund Gosse, 1883, *Seventeenth-Century Studies,* p. 143

General

I take this poet to have writ like a gentleman, that is, at leisure hours, and more to keep out of idleness than to establish a reputation, so that nothing regular or just can be expected from him.

Alexander Pope, 1710, *Letter to H. Cromwell, Dec. 17; Pope's Work,* ed. Courthope and Elwin, vol. VI

Crashawe possessed the requisites of a genuine poet, enthusiasm and sublimity; but he never undertook any grand or original work.

Nathan Drake, 1798, *Literary Hours,* No. xxviii

Crashaw formed his style on the most quaint and conceited school of Italian poetry, that of Marino; and there is a prevalent harshness and strained expression in his verses; but there are also many touches of beauty and solemnity, and the strength of his thoughts sometimes appears even in their distortion.

Thomas Campbell, 1819, *Specimens of the British Poets*

As a poet, his works have ever been appreciated by those most qualified to decide upon their sterling beauties, and have suggested to others (too frequently without acknowledgment) some of their finest imageries. In every volume of any pretensions to taste, designed to offer specimens of English poetry, extracts are to be found; yet, with the exception of being partially, and by no means accurately, printed in the bulky and inconvenient collections of Chalmers and Anderson, it is somewhat remarkable that, in an age when familiarity with our Old English Authors is so eagerly sought, a full reprint should have been deferred till now.

William B. Turnbull, 1858, ed., *Complete Works of Richard Crashaw,* Preliminary Observations, p. x

Like "charity" for "love," the word "sensuous" has deteriorated in our day. It is, I fear, more than in sound and root confused with "sensual," in its base application. I use it as Milton did, in the well-known passage when he defined Poetry to be "simple, *sensuous,* and passionate"; and I qualify "sensuousness" with "imaginative," that I may express our Poet's peculiar gift of looking at everything with a full, open, penetrative eye, yet through his imagination; his imagination not being as spectacles (coloured) astride the nose, but as a light of white glory all over his intellect and entire faculties. Only Wordsworth and Shelley, and recently Rossetti and Jean Ingelow are comparable with him in this. You can scarcely err in opening on any page in your out-look for it.

Alexander B. Grosart, 1873, ed., *The Complete Works of Richard Crashaw,* vol. II, p. lxii

Crashaw's verse is marked by some of the highest qualities of poetry. He has strong affinities to two of our great nineteenth-century poets; he has the rich imagination and sensuousness of Keats, and the subtlety of thought and exquisite lyrical flow of Shelley. Crashaw is essentially a sacred poet, and, compared with George Herbert, is his superior, judged from the purely poetic standpoint. Herbert is, in a limited degree, a popular poet; Crashaw is not, and has never been so. One of the reasons for this is (probably) the taste for artificial poetry of the school of Waller, Dryden, Pope, &c., during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The fact of his being a Catholic would also deter many readers from studying his works; but, poetical thought now being wider, and religious intolerance almost a thing of the past, it may be hoped that Crashaw will soon receive the recognition which is his due.

J. R. Tutin, 1887, ed., *Poems of Richard Crashaw,* Preface, p. viii

There is not in his work the slightest sign of the exercise of any critical faculty before, during, or after production. His masterpiece, one of the most astonishing things in English or any other literature, comes without warning at the end of *The Flaming Heart.* For page after page the poet has been poorly playing on some trifling conceits suggested by the picture of Saint Theresa and a seraph. First he thinks the painter ought to have changed the attributes; then he doubts whether a lesser change will not do; and always he treats his subject in a vein of grovelling and grotesque conceit which the boy Dryden in the stage of his elegy on Lord Hastings would have disdained. And then in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, without warning of any sort, the metre changes, the poet's inspiration catches fire, and there rushes up into the heaven of poetry this marvellous rocket of song. . . . Often, as in

verse after verse of *The Weeper,* it has an unearthly delicacy and witchery which only Blake, in a few snatches, has ever equalled; while at other times the poet seems to invent, in the most casual and unthinking fashion, new metrical effects and new jewelries of diction which the greatest lyric poets since—Coleridge, Shelley, Lord Tennyson, Mr. Swinburne—have rather deliberately imitated than spontaneously recovered. Yet to all this charm there is no small drawback. The very maddest and most methodless of the "Metaphysicals" cannot touch Crashaw in his tasteless use of conceits.

George Saintsbury, 1887, *History of Elizabethan Literature,* pp. 364, 369

Crashaw represents sensuous Mysticism. . . . Like Quarles, (though not to the same degree), he quits the ideal point of view, the high Platonic aether. We cannot say of him, as has been said of that "Son of Light," Origen, the great founder of Christian Mysticism, that he "is never betrayed into the imagery of earthly passion used by the monastic writers," and which also marked the style of the Italian Marino, from whose "Herod" Crashaw has left a brilliant paraphrase. Yet this mode of feeling has its place; it also demands and deserves its compartment in a Sacred Anthology. Crashaw's work in poetry, as a whole, is incomplete and irregular; Pope, whilst praising him, was correct in recognizing that he was an amateur rather than an artist. It was the same with Marvell:—neither, one would say, did justice to his fine natural gift. But Crashaw has a charm so unique, an imagination so nimble and subtle, phrases of such sweet and passionate felicity, that readers who . . . turn to his little book, will find themselves surprised and delighted, in proportion to their sympathetic sense of Poetry, when touched to its rarer and finer issues.

Francis Turner Palgrave, 1889, *The Treasury of Sacred Song,* Note, p. 342

JOSEPH HALL

1574-1656

Joseph Hall, born 1st July 1574 at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, became a fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, in 1595, incumbent of Halstead and Waltham, and dean of Worcester (1617). In that year he accompanied James I. to Scotland to help establish Episcopacy, and he was one of the English deputies to the synod of Dort. He became Bishop of Exeter in 1627, and as such on suspicion of Puritanism incurred Laud's enmity, though he zealously defended Episcopacy. In 1641 he was translated to Norwich, and having with other prelates protested against the validity of laws passed during their enforced absence from Parliament, was com-

mitted to the Tower, but liberated at the end of seven months, on finding bail for £5000. Shortly after his return to Norwich his revenues were sequestrated and his property pillaged. He retired to a small farm at Higham in 1647, and died 8th September 1656. His works, including *Contemplations, Christian Meditations, Episcopacy,* and *Mundus Alter et Idem,* a Latin satirical romance, were edited by Pratt (1808), by Peter Hall, a descendant (1837-39), and by Wynter (1863). His poetical *Satires: Virgidemiarum* (1597-98) Pope calls "the best poetry and the truest satire in the English language."

Patrick and Groome, eds., 1897, *Chambers's Biographical Dictionary,* p. 453

SEE: *Collected Poems,* ed. A. Davenport, 1949; T. F. Kinloch, *The Life and Works of Joseph Hall,* 1951.

PERSONAL

Joseph Hall, styled the Christian Seneca, from his sententious manner of writing, was justly celebrated for his piety, wit, learning, and extensive knowledge of mankind.

James Granger, 1769-1824, *Biographical History of England,* vol. II, p. 337

Both as a writer and as a preacher his reputation stands high. With less scholarship and wit than Andrewes, and less original power than Donne or Taylor, he writes with great fluency and energy, and with much better taste than any of these writers. Some have called him the best preacher of that century—no small honour among such giants; and undoubtedly, for pulpit oratory, his strong feelings and fluent expression, guided by superior taste, would be more effective than the undisciplined profusion and originality of his great rivals.

William Minto, 1872-80, *A Manual of English Prose Litterature,* p. 254

Virgidemiarum (1597-98)

These satires are marked with a classical precision, to which English poetry had yet rarely attained. They are replete with animation of style and sentiment. The indignation of the satirist is always the result of good sense. Nor are the thorns of severe invective unmixed with the flowers of pure poetry. The characters are delineated in strong and lively colouring, and their discriminations are touched with the masterly traces of genuine humour. The versification is equally energetic and elegant, and the fabric of the couplets approaches to the modern standard. It is no inconsiderable proof of a genius predominating over the general taste of an age when every preacher was a punster, to have written verses, where laughter was to be raised, and

the reader to be entertained with sallies of pleasantry, without quibbles and conceits. His chief fault is obscurity, arising from a remote phraseology, constrained combinations, unfamiliar allusions, elliptical apostrophes, and abruptness of expression.

Thomas Warton, 1778-81, *History of English Poetry*

In his *Satires,* which were published at the age of twenty-three, he discovered not only the early vigour of his own genious, but the powers and pliability of his native tongue. Unfortunately, perhaps unconsciously, he caught, from studying Juvenal and Persius as his models, an elliptical manner and an antique allusion, which cast obscurity over his otherwise spirited and amusing traits of English manners; though the satirist himself was so far from anticipating this objection, that he formally apologizes for *"too much stooping to the low reach of the vulgar."* But in many instances he redeems the antiquity of his allusions by their ingenious adaptation to modern manners; and this is but a small part of his praise; for in the point and volubility, and vigour of Hall's numbers, we might frequently imagine ourselves perusing Dryden.

Thomas Campbell, 1819, *Specimens of the British Poets*

The first book of the "Toothless Satires" was directed against the faults, literary and other, of the poets of the age; the second treated of academical abuses; the third of public manners and morality, which also form the matter of the "Biting Satires." The author's acknowledged models are Juvenal and Persius; and he professes that it was to their nervous and crabbed style of poetry, rather than to the imitation of Virgil and Spenser, that his genius inclined him.

"Rather had I, albe in careless rhymes,
Check the misordered world and lawless times."

What Hall's satires did towards "checking the misordered world" may not have been much; but, as compositions of the satirical order, they have kept a place in our literature.

David Masson, 1858, *The Life of John Milton,* vol. I, ch. vi

WILLIAM BRADFORD
1590-1657

Governor of Plymouth Colony, 1621-57. He left in manuscript a *History of Plymouth Plantation,* the leisurely composition of 20 years, which was drawn from by Morton, Prince, and Hutchinson as a basis for their respective histories, and after being lost for nearly a century was found in the library of the Bishop of London in 1855, and published soon after.

He was the earliest American historian, and his work exhibits judicial impartiality, broad conceptions, and a direct, vigorous style.

Oscar Fay Adams, 1897, *A Dictionary of American Authors,* p. 35

SEE: *Bradford's History of "Plimouth Plantation," ed.* Worthington C. Ford, 1912, 2 v.; *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647,* ed. Samuel Eliot Morrison, 1952; Samuel E. Morrison in *Dictionary of American Biography,* 1929.

History Of Plymouth Plantation

Governor Bradford's reputation as an author is decidedly of a posthumous character. He left a MS. history, in a folio volume of 270 pages, of the Plymouth colony, from the formation of their church in 1602 to 1647. It furnished the material for Morton's Memorial, was used by Prince and Governor Hutchinson in the preparation of their histories, and deposited, with the collection of papers of the former, in the library of the Old South Church, in Boston. During the desecration of this edifice as a riding-school by the British in the Revolutionary war, the MS. disappeared. A copy of a portion closing with the year 1620, in the handwriting of Nathaniel Morton, was discovered by the Rev. Alexander Young in the library of the First Church, at Plymouth, and printed in his *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers of the Colony of Plymouth,* in 1841. A "letterbook," in which Bradford preserved copies of his correspondence, met with a similar fate, a portion only having been rescued from a grocer's shop in Halifax, and published in the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, in 1794, vol. iii. of the first series of Collections, with a fragment of a poem on New England. These, with two other specimens of a few lines each, first published by the same Society in 1838, form, with the exception of some slight controversial pieces, the whole of his literary productions.

Evert A. and George L. Duyckinck, 1855-65-75, *Cyclopædia of American Literature,* ed. Simons, vol. I, p. 35

William Bradford, of the Mayflower and Plymouth Rock, deserves the preeminence of being called the father of American history. We pay to him also that homage which we tender to those authors who even by their writings give to us the impression that, admirable as they may be in authorship, behind their authorship is something still more admirable—their own manliness. . . . Governor Bradford wrote of events that had passed under his own eye, and that had been shaped by his own hand; and he had every qualification of a trustworthy narrator. His mind was placid, grave, well-poised; he was a student of many books and of many languages; and being thus developed both by letters and by experience, he was able to tell well

the truth of history as it had unfolded itself during his own strenuous and benignant career. His history is an orderly, lucid, and most instructive work; it contains many tokens of its author's appreciation of the nature and requirements of historical writing; and though so recently published in a perfect form, it must henceforward take its true place at the head of American historical literature, and win for its author the patristic dignity that we have ascribed to him.

Moses Coit Tyler, 1878, *A History of American Literature,* 1607-1676, vol. I, pp. 116, 118

Though not enjoying special educational advantages in early life, Bradford possessed more literary culture than was common among those of similar occupation to himself. He had some knowledge of Latin and Greek, and knew sufficient Hebrew to enable him to "see with his own eyes the ancient oracles of God in their native beauty." He was also well read in history and philosophy, and an adept in the theological discussion peculiar to the time. He employed much of his leisure in literary composition.

T. F. Henderson, 1886, *Dictionary of National Biography,* vol. VI, p. 163

Bradford was a forerunner of literature, not a historian. He stands not as an early Palfrey or Bancroft, but ranks with the useful company of annalists, diarists, and autobiographers, few of whom have equalled him in strength of character and fidelity of purpose. He was the first Pilgrim writer in America, the first recorder of doings in New England, and a story-teller of considerable power, as well as of absolute truthfulness in matters of fact.

Charles F. Richardson, 1887, *American Literature, 1607-1885,* vol. I, p. 75

RICHARD LOVELACE
1618-1658

Richard Lovelace was born in Woolwich, Kent, England, in 1618. He was graduated at Oxford in 1636, and went to court. Anthony Wood praises him extravagantly for beauty and amiability. He entered the royal service, and rose to the rank of colonel. For delivering to the Long Parliament a petition for the restoration of the king he was thrown into prison until he could procure heavy bail. He entered the French service in 1646, and was wounded at the siege of Dunkirk. He died in 1658, in extreme poverty, having spent a fortune in the royalist cause. He published *The Scholar,* a comedy; *The Soldier,* a tragedy (both of which are lost); and two volumes of lyrics addressed to Lucasta.

Rossiter Johnson, 1875, *Little Classics. Authors,* p. 159

See: *Poems*, ed. C. H. Wilkinson, 1925, 2v., 1930 (revised one-volume edition); C. H. Hartmann, *The Cavalier Spirit and Its Influence on the Life and Work of Richard Lovelace*, 1925.

Personal

He was an extraordinary handsome man, but prowd.

John Aubrey, 1669-96, *Brief Lives*, ed. Clark, vol. II, p. 37

Being then accounted the most amiable and beautiful person that ever eye beheld, a person also of innate modesty, virtue and courtly deportment, which made him then, but especially after, when he retired to the great city, much admired and adored by the female sex. In 1636, when the King and Queen were for some days entertained at Oxon, he was, at the request of a great Lady belonging to the Queen, made to the Archb. of Cant. then Chancellor of the University, actually created, among other persons of quality, Master of Arts, tho' but of two years standing; at which time his conversation being made public, and consequently his ingenuity and generous soul discovered, he became as much admired by the male, as before by the female sex. . . . He died in a very mean lodging in Gun-powder Alley near Shoe-lane, and was buried at the West-end of the Church of S. Bride alias Bridget in London, near to the body of his kinsman Will. Lovelace of Greys-Inn Esq; in sixteen hundred fifty and eight, having before been accounted by all those that well knew him, to have been a person well vers'd in the Greek and Lat. poets, in music whether practical or theoretical, instrumental or vocal, and in other things befitting a gentleman.

Anthony Wood, 1691-1721, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, vol. II, ff. 228, 229

There is no reason to suppose that Richard Lovelace, the poet of Bethersden, was ever married. He played an active part in the stormy drama of the great English Rebellion, his natural extravagance and unswerving loyalty, at a period when loyalty was more expensive than any extravagance, must have brought him at an early period into serious pecuniary difficulties, and for a part of his brief career he was probably, like his father, a soldier of fortune. When not actually in military service he was either plotting or in prison, and his romantic life closed in obscurity and wretchedness. In the short period of his Court life he was apparently a great favourite with women; we have the assurance of Wood that he was the handsomest man of his time; and to the exterior graces of his person were united a cultivated and brilliant mind, a refined courtesy of manner, and a disposition at once gentle and heroic. Lucasta and Althea are the subjects of his amorous

verses; a third, Amarantha, seems to have been another name for Lucasta, to whom we may conclude, from the evidence of the poems themselves, that he was actually betrothed. The seeds of future domestic happiness were therefore sown, and in a happier time might have borne rich fruit to the unhappy poet. As it is, there is no evidence forthcoming to contradict the story preserved by Wood, and which has been already referred to, except the fact that the posthumous poems of Richard Lovelace contain no reference to Lucasta's broken troth.

Arthur E. Waite, 1884, "Richard Lovelace," *Gentleman's Magazine,* vol. 257, p. 474

General

Lucasta: Epodes, Odes, Sonnets, Songs, &c. Lond. 1649, Oct. The reason why he gave that title was, because, some time before, he had made his amours to a gentlewoman of great beauty and fortune named Lucy Sacheverel, whom he usually called *Lux casta;* but she upon a strong report that Lovelace was dead of his wound received at Dunkirk, soon after married.

Anthony Wood, 1691-1721, *Athenæ Oxonienses,* vol. II, f. 228

It was worth while, perhaps, to reprint Lovelace, if only to show what dull verses may be written by a man who has made one lucky hit. . . . He is to be classed with the *lucky* authors who, without great powers, have written one or two pieces so facile in thought and fortunate in phrase as to be carried lightly in the memory, poems in which analysis finds little, but which are charming in their frail completeness.

James Russell Lowell, 1858-64-90, *Library of Old Authors, Prose Works,* Riverside ed., vol. I, pp. 254, 302

Whether we think of Lovelace as the spoiled darling of a voluptuous court, or as dying of want in a cellar; whether we picture him as sighing at the feet of beauty, or as fighting stoutly for his country and his king; whether he is winning all hearts by the resistless charms of voice and presence, or returning broken from battle to suffer the bitterness of poverty and desertion, we know that in his two famous lyrics we possess the real and perfect fruit, the golden harvest, of that troubled and many-sided existence.

Agnes Repplier, 1891, "English Love-Songs," *Points of View,* p. 41

As a poet Lovelace is known almost exclusively by his best lyrics. Popularly his name is more familiar than those of his contemporaries, Carew, Suckling, Randolph, and Waller, who are at most points his superiors. This is due partially, no doubt, to the fact that his poems not being very acces-

sible except in anthologies, few have courted disappointment by perusing his minor pieces. . . . Whether Lovelace is a mere reckless improvisatore, or the most fastidious of the concettists, may be open to argument, but it is tolerably certain that to the majority of readers his minor lyrics will remain as poetry unintelligible. If none of his song-writing contemporaries, with the possible exception of Wither, could have surpassed the exquisite "Tell me not (sweet) I am unkind," few could have written short pieces so inelegant or so vapid as some of the "Posthume Poems." On a surer foundation than the permanence of his poetry rests the chivalrous repute in which his life has been held. The Adonis of the court, "the handsomest man of his time," he rejected a courtier's career for the profession of arms, and his heroism, rather than his rhyme, challenged the oft-quoted comparison with Sir Philip Sidney.

Thomas Seccombe, 1893, *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. XXXIV, p. 171

THOMAS FULLER
1608-1661

Born, at Aldwincle, Northamptonshire, June 1606. Educated at village school and by his father. To Queen's Coll., Cambridge, 29 June 1621; B. A., 1625; M. A., 1628; B. D., 11 June 1635. Ordained, 1630; Perpetual Curate to St. Benet's, Cambridge, 1630-33. Prebend of Netherbury, 18 June 1631 to 1641. Rector of Broadwindsor, Dorsetshire, 1634-41. Married, 1637 (?). Proctor for Diocese of Bristol, 1640. Settled in London after wife's death, 1641. Curate of Savoy, 1641-43. Removed to Oxford, 1643. Chaplain to Sir Ralph Hopton, 1643-44. Entered Princess Henrietta's household at Exeter, 1644. Bodley Lecturer at Exeter, 21 March 1646. To London, April 1646. Perpetual Curate of Waltham Abbey, 1648 (or 1649?). Married Hon. Mary Roper, 1651. Rector of Cranford, March 1658. Created D. D. by Royal Letters Patent, Aug. 1660. Died, in London, 16 Aug. 1661. Buried at Cranford. WORKS: [besides a number of separate sermons] *David's Hanious Sinne*, 1631; *The History of the Holy Warre*, 1639; *Joseph's Party-coloured Coat* (under initials T. F.), 1640; *The Holy State* and *The Profane State*, 1642; *Truth Maintained*, 1643; *Good Thoughts in Bad Times*, 1645; *Andronicus*, 1646 (2nd and 3rd edns. same year); *The Cause and Cure of a Wounded Conscience*, 1647; *Good Thoughts in Worse Times*, 1647; *A Pisgahsight of Palestine*, 1650; contrib. to *Abel Redivivus*, 1651; *A Comment on Matt. iv. 1-11*, 1652; *The Infant's Advocate*, 1652; *A Comment on Ruth* (anon), 1654; *Ephemeris Parliamentaria* (anon.), 1654; *A Triple Reconciler*, 1654; *The Church History of Britain*, 1655; *History of the University of Cambridge*, 1655; *History of Waltham Abbey*, 1655; *A Collection of Sermons* (5 pts.), 1656-57; *The Best Name on Earth*, 1657; *The Appeal of Injured Innocence*, 1659; *An Alarum to the Counties of*

England and Wales (anon.), 1660 (2nd and 3rd edns. same year); *Mixt Contemplations in Better Times,* 1660; *A Panegyrick to His Majesty,* 1660. POSTHUMOUS: *The History of the Worthies of England* (ed. by J. Fuller), 1662; *Collected Sermons* (ed. by J. E. Bailey and W. E. A. Axton), 1891. He *edited:* Rev. H. Smith's *Sermons,* 1657; J. Spencer's Καινα και Παλαια, 1658.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 105

SEE: *Poems and Translations in Verse,* ed. A. B. Grosart, 1868; *Thoughts and Contemplations of Thomas Fuller,* ed. James O. Wood, 1964; M. Fuller, *Life, Times and Writings of Thomas Fuller,* 1884, 2 v.; William Addsion, *Worthy Dr. Fuller,* 1950.

PERSONAL

He was a boy of a pregnant witt, and when the bishop and his father were discoursing, he would be by and hearken, and now and then putt in, and sometimes beyond expectation, or his yeares. He was of a middle stature; strong sett; curled haire; a very working head, in so much that, walking and meditating before dinner, he would eate-up a penny loafe, not knowing that he did it. His naturall memorie was very great, to which he had added the *art of memorie:* he would repeate to you forwards and backwards all the signes from Ludgate to Charingcrosse. . . . He was a pleasant facetious person, and a *bonus socius.*

John Aubrey, 1669-96, *Brief Lives,* ed. Clark, vol. I, pp. 257, 258

In a moral and religious point of view, the character of Fuller is entitled to our veneration, and is altogether one of the most attractive and interesting which that age exhibits to us. His buoyant temper, and his perpetual mirthfulness, were altogether at variance with that austerity and rigour which characterized so many of the religionists of his time; but his life and conduct bore ample testimony that he possessed genuine and habitual piety. Amidst all his levity of manner, there was still the gravity of the heart—deep veneration for all things sacred; and while his wit clothed even his religious thoughts and feelings with irresistible pleasantry, his manner is as different from that of the scorner, as the innocent laugh of childhood from the malignant chuckle of a demon. In all the relations of domestic and social life, his conduct was most exemplary. In one point, especially, does he appear in honourable contrast with the bigots of all parties in that age of strife—he had learnt, partly from his natural benevolence, and partly from a higher principle, the lessons of "that charity which thinketh no evil," and which so few of his contemporaries knew how to practise.

Henry Rogers, 1842, "Thomas Fuller," *Edinburgh Review,* vol. 74, p. 356

General

His writings are very facetious, and (where he is careful) judicious. His *Pisgah Sight* is the exactest; his *Holy War and State,* the wittiest; his *Church History,* the unhappiest,—written in such a time when he could not do the truth right with safety, nor wrong it with honour; and his *Worthies,* not finished at his death, the most imperfect. As for his other works, he that shall but read FULLER'S name unto them will not think them otherwise but worthy of that praise and respect which the whole nation afforded unto the author.

William Winstanley, 1660, *England's Worthies*

Next to Shakspeare, I am not certain whether Thomas Fuller, beyond all other writers, does not excite in me the sense and emotion of the marvellous; —the degree in which any given faculty or combination of faculties is possessed and manifested, so far surpassing what one would have thought possible in a single mind, as to give one's admiration the flavour and quality of wonder! Wit was the staff and substance of Fuller's intellect. It was the element, the earthen base, the material which he worked in, and this very circumstance has defrauded him of his due praise for the practical wisdom of the thoughts, for the beauty and variety of the truths, into which he shaped the stuff. Fuller was incomparably the most sensible, the least prejudiced, great man of an age that boasted a galaxy of great men. He is a very voluminous writer, and yet, in all his numerous volumes on so many different subjects, it is scarcely too much to say, that you will hardly find a page in which some one sentence out of every three does not deserve to be quoted for itself—as motto or as maxim.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1829, *Miscellanies,* ed. Ashe, p. 327

Fuller is one of the few voluminous authors who is never tedious. . . . Of all the forms of wit, Fuller affects that of the satirist least. Though he can be caustic, and sometimes is so, he does not often indulge the propensity; and when he does it is without bitterness—a sly irony, a good-humoured gibe, at which even its object could hardly have helped laughing, is all he ventures upon. . . . So exuberant is Fuller's wit, that, as his very melancholy is mirthful, so his very wisdom wears motley. But it is wisdom notwithstanding; nor are there many authors, in whom we shall find so much solid sense and practical sagacity, in spite of the grotesque disguise in which they masque themselves.

Henry Rogers, 1842, "Life and Writings of Thomas Fuller," *Edinburgh Review,* vol. 74, pp. 334, 340, 343

No man ever (in writing at least) made so many jokes, good, bad, and indifferent; be the subject what it may, it does not matter; in season and out of season he is equally facetious; he cannot let slip an occasion of saying a good thing any more than a man who is tripped can keep himself from falling; the habit is as irresistible with him as the habit of breathing; and yet there is probably neither an ill-natured nor a profane witticism to be found in all that he has written. It is the sweetest-blooded wit that was ever infused into man or book. And how strong and weighty, as well as how gentle and beautiful, much of his writing is!

George L. Craik, 1861, *A Compendious History of English Literature and of the English Language,* vol. II, p. 72

The Quaintness of the seventeenth century is commonly linked with the name of Thomas Fuller, not because he is the most glaring example, but rather because he is one of the few high class writers in whom this quality is conspicuous. For in fact, although quaintness is best known to the modern reader through his writings, yet he does not afford a true example of the fault of quaintness. His quaintness is a sort, a droll sort perhaps, of beauty; because the language is a true vesture to the thought, and Fuller is quaint in his very thought. The quaintness which is blamable rises when a writer is more curious about his diction than careful to have something to say before he covers paper with decorated words. The Quaintness of the Seventeenth century is a phenomenon of the same nature as the Euphuism of the Sixteenth. It is like the secular return of an epidemic enthusiasm.

John Earle, 1890, *English Prose,* p. 452

As a theological writer, Fuller is distinguished by earnest piety and indomitable cheerfulness rather than by sublimity of thought or intensity of emotion. Though his moderate attitude on the burning questions of the day did not entirely satisfy either of the great religious parties, it enabled him to continue his ministry through all the vicissitudes of the Commonwealth without any of those vacillations of principle by which other men purchased the toleration of the ruling powers. His temperament unfitted him for entering into the war of invective and vituperation that was raging around him. He rarely displays either enthusiasm or indignation, preferring to interest and amuse rather than to rouse or convince. The homely imagery, of which his sermons and devotional writings are full, laid him open to the charge of levity; but though his similes are often grotesque, they are seldom actually ludicrous, while their very incongruity sometimes gives an added force to the comparison.

J. Howard B. Masterman, 1897, *The Age of Milton,* p. 172

JOHN EARLE

1601?-1665

John Earle or Earles, 1601-1665, entered at Merton Coll., Oxford, 1620, became chaplain and tutor to Prince Charles, and accompanied him in his exile. On the Restoration he was made Dean of Westminster, consecrated Bishop of Worcester in 1662, and transferred to Salisbury in 1663. *Microcosmographie; or, A Peece of the World discovered in Essayes and Characters,* Lon., 1628, 8vo; 6th ed., 1630, 12mo; 10th ed., Salisbury, 1786. New ed. (78 characters) with Notes and Appendix, by Philip Bliss, Lon., 1811, sm. 8vo. This ed. contains a Catalogue of the various Writers of Character to the year 1700. . . . "An Elegy upon Francis Beaumont," by Bishop Earle, will be found printed at the end of Beaumont's Poems, 1640. He trans. into Latin the Eikon Basilike, (Hague, 1649), and Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity;* the last was destroyed by the carelessness of his servants. The character of Bishop Earle was most exemplary.

S. Austin Allibone, 1854-58, *Dictionary of English Literature,* vol. I, p. 539

SEE: *Microcosmographie,* ed. W. H. D. Rouse, 1899, repr. 1904.

PERSONAL

Doctor Earles was at that Time Chaplain in the House to the Earl of Pembroke, Lord Chamberlain of his Majesty's Household, and had a Lodging in the Court under that Relation: He was a Person very notable for his Elegance in the Greek and Latin Tongues; and being Fellow of Merton College in Oxford, and having been Proctor of the University, and some very witty, and sharp Discourses being published in Print without his Consent, though known to be his, He grew suddenly into a very general Esteem with all Men; being a Man of great Piety and Devotion; a most eloquent and powerful Preacher; and of a Conversation so pleasant and delightful, so very innocent, and so very facetious, that no Man's Company was more desired, and more loved. No man was more negligent in his Dress, and Habit, and Mien; no Man more wary, and cultivated, in his Behaviour, and Discourse; insomuch as He had the greater Advantage when He was known, by promising so little before He was known. He was an excellent Poet both in Latin, Greek, and English, as appears by many Pieces yet abroad; though He suppressed Many More himselfe, especially of English, incomparably good, out of an Austerity to those Sallies of his Youth. . . . He was amongst the few excellent Men who never had, nor never could have an Enemy, but such a one, who was an Enemy to all Learning, and Virtue, and therefore would never make himselfe known.

Lord (Edward Hyde) Clarendon, 1674(?) *Life*

He was the man of all the Clergy for whom the King had the greatest esteem. He had been his sub-tutor, and had followed him in all his exile with so clear a Character, that the King could never see or hear of any one thing amiss in him. So he, who had a secret pleasure in finding out any thing that lessened a man esteemed eminent for piety, yet had a value for him beyond all the men of his order.

Gilbert Burnet, 1715-34, *History of My Own Time*

General

Perhaps the most valuable collection of characters, previous to the year 1700, is that published by Bishop Earle, in 1628, under the title of *Microcosmography,* and which may be considered as a pretty faithful delineation of many classes of characters as they existed during the close of the sixteenth, and commencement of the seventeenth century.

Nathan Drake, 1817, *Shakspeare and His Times*

In some of these short characters, Earle is worthy of comparison with La Bruyère; in others, perhaps the greater part, he has contented himself with pictures of ordinary manners, such as the varieties of occupation, rather than of intrinsic character, supply. In all, however, we find an acute observation and a happy humor of expression. The chapter entitled the Sceptic is best known: it is witty, but an insult throughout on the honest searcher after truth, which could have come only from one that was content to take up his own opinions for ease or profit. Earle is always gay, and quick to catch the ridiculous, especially that of exterior appearances: his style is short, describing well with a few words, but with much of the affected quaintness of that age. It is one of those books which give us a picturesque idea of the manners of our fathers at a period now become remote; and for this reason, were there no other, it would deserve to be read.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe,* pt. iii, ch. vii, par. 39

The one strain in character which throughout afflicts him most, and for which he reserves his most distilled contempt, is the strain of unreality—the affectation whose sin is always to please, and which fails so singularly of its object. Hypocrisy, pretension, falseness—against everything which has that lack of simplicity so fatal to true life he sets his face. For the rest he can hardly read the enigma; he only states it reverently.

Arthur Christopher Benson, 1896, *Essays,* p. 34

JAMES SHIRLEY
1596-1666

Born, in London, 18 Sept. 1596. At Merchant Taylors' School, Oct. 1608 to June 1612. Matric., St. John's Coll., Oxford, 1612. Removed to Catherine Hall, Cambridge. B. A., 1617. Ordained Curate of parish near St. Albans. Resigned Curacy on becoming a Roman Catholic. Kept a Grammar school at St. Albans, 1623-24. This failing, he removed to London; devoted himself to literature. Mem. of Gray's Inn, 1634. Wrote many plays till 1640. Valet of Chamber to Queen Henrietta Maria. Kept a school in White Friars, 1640-46. Resumed career of dramatist, 1646. Died, in London, Oct. 1666. Buried in church of St. Giles'-in-the-Fields, 29 Oct. WORKS: *Eccho* (no copy known), 1618 (another edn., called: *Narcissus, or the Self-Lover,* 1646); *The Wedding,* 1629; *The Greatful Servant,* 1630; *The Schol of Complement* (also known as *Love Tricks*), 1631; *Changes,* 1632; *The Wittie Fair One,* 1633; *A Contention for Honour and Riches,* 1633; *The Bird in a Cage,* 1633; *The Triumph of Peace,* 1633; *The Traytor,* 1635; *Hide Park,* 1637; *The Young Admirall,* 1637; *The Gamester,* 1637; *The Example,* 1637; *The Lady of Pleasure,* 1637; *The Royall Master,* 1638; *The Duke's Mistris,* 1638; *The Maide's Revenge,* 1639; *The Ball* (with Chapman), 1639; *Chabot, Admiral of France* (with Chapman), 1639; *The Opportunitie,* 1640; *The Coronation,* (pubd. under Fletcher's name), 1640; *St. Patrick for Ireland,* 1640; *The Constant Maid,* 1640 (another edn., called: *Love will finde out the Way,* 1661); *The Humorous Courtier,* 1640; *The Arcadia,* 1640; *Poems,* 1646; *The Triumph of Beautie,* 1646; *The Way made Plain to the Latin Tongue,* 1649; *Grammatica Anglo-Latina,* 1651; *The Cardinal,* 1652; *Six New Playes,* 1653 [1652]; *Cupid and Death* (under initials: J. S.), 1653; *The Gentleman of Venise,* 1655; *The Politician,* 1655; *The Rudiments of Grammar, 1656; Εισαγωγη,* 1656; *Honour and Mammon; and, the Contention of Ajax and Ulysses,* 1659; *Andromana* (under initials: J. S.), 1660. POSTHUMOUS: *An Essay towards an Universal and Rational Grammar,* ed. by J. T. Phillipps, 1726; *Double Falsehood* (pubd. under Shakespeare's name; probably by Shirley), 1728; *Jenkin of Wales,* ed. by J. O. Halliwell, 1861. COLLECTED WORKS: *Dramatic Works and Poems,* ed., with memoir, by A. Dyce (6 vols.), 1833.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 256

SEE: *Six Plays,* ed. Edmund Gosse, 1888; *Poems,* ed. Ray L. Armstrong, 1941; Arthur H. Nason, *Shirley: A Biographical and Critical Study,* 1915.

PERSONAL

He was educated at St. John's College, in Oxford, where he was taken great notice of by Dr. Laud, then president of that house. He entered into holy orders; though he was much discouraged from it, by his friend the president, on account of a large mole on his left cheek; and was some time a parish priest in Hertfordshire. He afterward turned Roman Catholic, and kept

a school at St. Alban's, but soon grew tired of that employment, and going to London commenced poet. He wrote no less than thirty dramatic pieces, some of which were acted with great applause. In the Interregnum, he was necessitated to return to his former profession of schoolmaster; in which he became eminent, and wrote several grammatical books for the use of his scholars.

James Granger, 1769-1824, *Biographical History of England,* vol. III, p. 130

General

One of such Incomparable parts, that he was the Chief of the Second-rate Poets: and by some has been thought even equal to *Fletcher* himself. . . . I need not take pains to shew his Intimacy, not only with the Poets of his Time; but even the Value and Admiration that Persons of the first Rank had for him; since the Verses before several of his Works, and his Epistles Dedicatory sufficiently shew it. He has writ several *Dramatick Pieces,* to the Number of 37, which are in print: besides others which are in Manuscript.

Gerard Langbaine, 1691, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets,* pp. 474, 475

Claims a place amongst the worthies of this period, not so much for any transcendent talent in himself, as that he was the last of a great race, all of whom spoke nearly the same language, and had a set of moral feelings and notions in common. A new language, and quite a new turn of tragic and comic interest, came in with the Restoration.

Charles Lamb, 1808, *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare*

Shirley's facility in composition is proved by the number of his plays; and doubtless they would have swelled into an ampler catalogue, had not the anti-poetic spirit of Puritanism suppressed the stage, while the vigour of his genius was yet unimpaired. No single writer, among the early English dramatists, with the exception of Shakespeare, has bequeathed so many regular five-act pieces to posterity. . . . His fine moral feeling rejected those unhallowed themes, on which some of his contemporaries boldly ventured; he offends us by no glowing pictures of incestuous love. His writings are soiled, in a certain degree, by gross and immodest allusions; but whoever is conversant with our ancient drama will admit that the Muse of Shirley is comparatively chaste. . . . He abounds in brilliant thoughts, in noble and majestic sentiments, yet exhibits little of profound reflexion. His imagination seldom takes a lofty flight: he loves to crowd his dramas with events of romantic

beauty; but he shews no fondness for the ideal world, its ghosts, and magic wonders.

Alexander Dyce, 1833, ed., *Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*, vol. I, pp. lxiii, lxv

Shirley has no originality, no force in conceiving or delineating character, little of pathos, and less perhaps of wit: his dramas produce no deep impression in reading, and of course can leave none in the memory. But his mind was poetical; his better characters, especially females, express pure thoughts in pure language; he is never tumid or affected, and seldom obscure; the incidents succeed rapidly; the personages are numerous; and there is a general animation in the scenes, which causes us to read him with some pleasure. No very good play, nor possibly any very good scene, could be found in Shirley; but he has many lines of considerable beauty. Among his comedies, the *Gamesters* may be reckoned the best. Charles I is said to have declared, that it was "the best play he had seen these seven years"; and it has even been added, that the story was of his royal suggestion. It certainly deserves praise both for language and construction of the plot, and it has the advantage of exposing vice to ridicule; but the ladies of that court, the fair forms whom Vandyke has immortalized, must have been very different indeed from their posterity if they could sit it through.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, pt. iii, ch. vi, par. 98

Shirley is in complete contrast with Ford in that he neither sought for overstrained and unnatural situations as a stimulus for his tragedy, nor allowed his comedy to degenerate into coarse buffoonery. Writing at the close of an extraordinarily prolific dramatic period, and at a time when the works of the great dramatists of that period were being made accessible in collected form, he drew freely from them for characters, situations, and ideas. But though there is little originality in his dramas, he shews great dexterity in the management of his material, and a facility of poetic expression which is pleasing until it grows monotonous. The plots of many of his plays are ingenious and interesting, and, as in the case of Massinger, a healthy moral tone underlies his occasional grossness. Shirley's masques are of considerable literary value, and the few lyrics he wrote show him to be a lyric poet of no mean power.

J. Howard B. Masterman, 1897, *The Age of Milton*, p. 87

Remarkably alive to the danger of distracting the spectator's interest from the main plot of the action of a play, he displayed in tragic as well as in comic actions a curious presentiment of the modern theatrical principle that

everything depends on the success of one great scene (*la scène à faire*). His tragedies of *The Traitor* and *The Cardinal,* his tragic-comedy of *The Royal Master,* and his comedy of *The Gamester,* may be instanced as signal examples of his constructive skill. His excellence seems to lie less in the depiction of the comic than in that of serious scenes and characters; but, as is shown in all his comedies from the earliest onwards, but more especially by his *Hyde Park* and by the less attractive comedy of *The Ball,* in which he collaborated with Chapman, he was an acute observer and at times a humorous delineator of the vagaries of contemporary manners, whether in town or country. . . . But what chiefly entitles Shirley to hold the place to which he has been restored among our great dramatists is the spirit of poetry which adorns and elevates so many of his plays. He was one of the last of our seventeenth-century playwrights who interspersed their dialogue with passages of poetic beauty, at once appropriate to the sentiment of the situation and capable of carrying their audience to a higher imaginative level. Nor was he merely the last of the group; few members of it, besides Shakespeare himself, have surpassed Shirley in the exercise of the rare power of ennobling his dramatic diction by images which, while they "would surpass the life," spring without effort from the infinitude of the suggestions offered by it to creative fancy.

Adolphus William Ward, 1897, *Dictionary of National Biography,* vol. LII, p. 130

ABRAHAM COWLEY

1618-1667

Born, in London, 1618. King's Scholar at Westminster School, 1628 (?)-1636. First poems published, 1633. Scholar at Trinity Coll., Cambridge, 14 June 1637; B. A., 1639; Minor Fellow, 30 Oct., 1640; M. A., 1642; Major Fellow, 1642. Latin Comedy, *Naufragium Joculare* performed before University, 2 Feb. 1638. *The Guardian* performed, 12 March 1641; rewritten and produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields as *The Cutter of Coleman Street,* 16 Dec. 1661. Ejected from Cambridge as a Royalist, and removed to St. John's Coll., Oxford, 1664. Afterwards in household of Earl of St. Alban's, and in Court of exiled Queen in France. Engaged on diplomatic services. Returned to England, 1656. Studied Medicine. M. D., Oxford, 2 Dec. 1657. Removed to Chertsey, April 1665. Died there, 28 July 1667. Buried in Westminster Abbey. WORKS: *Poetical Blossoms* (anon.), 1633; *Love's Riddle,* 1638; *Naufragium Joculare,* 1638; *A Satyre: the Puritan and the Papist,* 1643(?); *Ad Populum* (anon.), 1644; *The Mistress,* 1647; *The Foure Ages of England* (anon.), 1648; *The Guardian,* 1650 (second version, entitled: *The Cutter of Coleman Street,* 1663); *Poems,* 1656; *Ode upon the Blessed Restoration,* 1660; *Vision concerning . . . Cromwell the Wicked,* 1661; *A Proposal for the Advance-*

ment of Experimental Philosophy, 1661; *A. Couleii Plantarum libri duo,* 1662; *Verses upon several Occasions,* 1663; *Verses lately written,* 1663. POSTHUMOUS: *A Poem on the late Civil War,* 1679; *Love's Chronicle* (anon.), (1730?). He *translated: Anacreon* (anon., with Willis, Wood and Oldham), 1683. COLLECTED WORKS: ed., with *life,* by T. Sprat, 1668 (subsequent edns., some enlarged, 1689-1721); ed., with *life* by Grosart, 1880-81.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 67

SEE: *English Writings,* ed. A. R. Waller, 1905-6; Arthur H. Nethercot, *Cowley: The Muses's Hannibal,* 1931.

PERSONAL

Even when I was a very young boy at school, instead of running about on holy-days and playing with my fellows, I was wont to steal from them, and walk into the fields, either alone with a book, or with some one companion, if I could find any of the same temper. I was then, too, so much an enemy to all constraint, that my masters could never prevail on me, by any persuasions or encouragements, to learn without book the common rules of grammar; in which they dispensed with me alone, because they found I made a shift to do the usual exercise out of my own reading and observation. That I was then of the same mind as I am now (which, I confess, I wonder at, myself) may appear by the latter end of an ode, which I made when I was but thirteen years old, and which was then printed, with many other verses. The beginning of it is boyish: but of this part, which I here set down (if a very little were corrected), I should hardly now be much ashamed.

Abraham Cowley, 1667(?) "On Myself," *Essays*

Went to Mr. Cowley's funerall, whose corps lay at Wallingford House, and was thence convey'd to Westminster Abbey, in a hearse with six horses, and all funeral decency; neeare an hundred coaches of noblemen and persons of qualitie following; among these all the witts of the towne, divers bishops and cleargymen.

John Evelyn, 1667, *Diary, August 3*

In the thirteenth Year of his Age there came forth a little Book under his Name, in which there were many things that might well become the Vigour and Force of a manly Wit. The first beginning of his studies, was a Familiarity with the most solid and unaffected Authors of Antiquary, which he fully digested not only in his Memory, but his Judgment. By this Advantage he learn'd nothing while a Boy, that he needed to forget or forsake, when he came to be a Man. His Mind was rightly season'd at first, and he had

nothing to do, but still to proceed on the same Foundation on which he began. He was wont to relate, that he had this Defect in his Memory at that time, that his Teachers could never bring it to retain the ordinary Rules of Grammar. However he supply'd that want, by conversing with the Books themselves, from whence those Rules had been drawn.

Thomas Sprat, 1668. *An Account of the Life of Mr. Abraham Cowley*

Cowley's allowance was, at last, not above three hundred a year. He died at Chertsey; and his death was occasioned by a mean accident, whilst his great friend, Dean Sprat, was with him on a visit there. They had been together to see a neighbour at Cowley's; who (according to the fashion of those times) made them too welcome. They did not set out for their walk home till it was too late; and had drank so deep, that they lay out in the fields all night. This gave Cowley the fever that carried him off. The parish still talk of the drunken Dean.

Alexander Pope, 1728-30, *Spence's Anecdotes,* ed. Singer, p. 10

Of Cowley, we are told by Barnes, who had means enough of information, that, whatever he may talk of his own inflammability, and the variety of characters by which his heart was divided, he in reality was in love but once, and then never had resolution to tell his passion.

Samuel Johnson, 1779, *Abraham Cowley, Lives of the English Poets*

We suspect, from the portraits of Cowley, that his blood was not very healthy by nature. . . . Cowley and Thomson were alike in their persons, their dispositions, and their fortunes. They were both fat men, not handsome; very amiable and sociable; no enemies to a bottle; taking interest both in politics and retirement; passionately fond of external nature, of fields, woods, gardens, &c.; bachelors,—in love, and disappointed; faulty in style, yet true poets in *themselves,* if not always the best in their writings, that is to say, seeing everything in its poetical light; childlike in their ways; and, finally, they were both made easy in their circumstances by the party whom they served; both went to live at a little distance from London, and on the banks of the Thames; and both died of a cold and fever, originating in a careless exposure to the weather, not without more than a suspicion of previous "jollification" with "the Dean," on Cowley's part, and great probability of a like vivacity on that of Thomson, who had been visiting his friends in London. Thomson could push the bottle like a regular *bon vivant:* and

Cowley's death is attributed to his having forgotten his proper bed, and slept in a field all night, in company with his reverend and jovial friend Sprat.

Leigh Hunt, 1847, *Men, Women, and Books*, vol. II, p. 50

Essays

In all our comparisons of taste, I do not know whether I have ever heard your opinion of a poet, very dear to me,—the now-out-of-fashion Cowley. Favour me with your judgment of him, and tell me if his prose essays, in particular, as well as no inconsiderable part of his verse, be not delicious. I prefer the graceful rambling of his essays, even to the courtly elegance and ease of Addison; abstracting from this the latter's exquisite humour.

Charles Lamb, 1797, *Letter to Coleridge, Letters*, ed. Ainger, vol. I, p. 64

They are eminently distinguished for the grace, the finish, and the clearness which his verse too often wants. That there is one cry which pervades them —vanity of vanities! all is vanity!—that there is an almost ostentatious longing for obscurity and retirement, may be accounted for by the fact that at an early age Cowley was thrown among the cavaliers of the civil wars, sharing the exile and the return of the Stuarts, and doubtless disgusted, as so pure a writer was pretty sure to be, by a dissolute Court, with whom he would find it easier to sympathize in its misery than in its triumph.

Mary Russell Mitford, 1851, *Recollections of a Literary Life*, p. 36

His prose is as easy and sensible as his poetry is contorted and unreasonable. A polished man, writing for polished men, pretty much as he would speak to them in a drawing-room,—this I take to be the idea which they had of a good author in the seventeenth century. It is the idea which Cowley's *Essays* leave of his character; it is the kind of talent which the writers of the coming age take for their model; and he is the first of that grave and amiable group which, continued in Temple, reaches so far as to include Addison.

H. A. Taine, 1871, *History of English Literature*, tr. Van Laun, vol. I, bk. ii, ch. i, p. 205

This test of re-reading is, of course, only an approximate one. So great an authority as Hume said it was sufficient to read Cowley over, but that Parnell after the fiftieth reading was as fresh as at the first. Now, for my part, I have to go to the encyclopedia to find out who Parnell was, but of Cowley even desultory readers like myself know something. His essays one can not only read, but re-read. They make one of the unpretentious minor

books that one can put in his pocket and take with him on a walk to the woods, and nibble at under a tree or by a waterfall. Solitude seems to bring out its quality, as it does that of some people.

John Burroughs, 1897, "On the Re-reading of Books," *The Century*, vol. 55, p. 147

General

One of our late great poets is sunk in his reputation, because he could never forgive any conceit which came in his way; but swept, like a drag-net, great and small. There was plenty enough—but the dishes were ill sorted; whole pyramids of sweetmeats for boys and women, but little of solid meat for men. All this proceeded not from any want of knowledge, but of judgment. Neither did he want that in discerning the beauties and faults of other poets, but only indulged himself in the luxury of writing; and perhaps knew it was a fault, and hoped to find it. For this reason, though he must always be thought a great poet, he is no longer esteemed a good writer; and for ten impressions which his works have had in so many successive years, yet at present a hundred books are scarcely purchased once a twelvemonth; for, as my last Lord Rochester said, though somewhat profanely, "Not being of God, he could not stand."

John Dryden, 1700, *Preface to the Fables*

Cowley is an author extremely corrupted by the bad taste of his age; but had he lived even in the purest times of Greece or Rome, he must always have been a very indifferent poet. He had no ear for harmony; and his verses are only known to be such by the rhyme which terminates them. In his rugged untunable numbers are conveyed sentiments the most strained and distorted, long-spun allegories, distant allusions, and forced conceits. Great ingenuity, however, and vigour of thought, sometimes break out midst those unnatural conceptions; a few anacreontics surprise us by their ease and gaiety: his prose writings please, by the honesty and goodness which they express, and even by their spleen and melancholy. This author was much more praised and admired during his lifetime, and celebrated after his death, than the great Milton.

David Hume, 1762, *The History of England, The Commonwealth*, vol. V

The power of Cowley is not so much to move the affections, as to exercise the understanding. . . . A mind capacious by nature, and replenished by study. In the general review of Cowley's poetry it will be found that he wrote with abundant fertility, but negligent or unskilful selection; with much

thought but with little imagery; that he is never pathetic, and rarely sublime; but always either ingenious or learned, either acute or profound. . . . His manner he had in common with others; but his sentiments were his own. Upon every subject he thought for himself; and such was his copiousness of knowledge that something at once remote and applicable rushed into his mind; yet it is not likely that he always rejected a commodious idea merely because another had used it; his known wealth was so great, that he might have borrowed without loss of credit. . . . He makes no selection of words, nor seeks any neatness of phrase; he has no elegance, either lucky or elaborate, as his endeavours were rather to impress sentences upon the understanding than images on the fancy, he has few epithets, and those scattered without peculiar propriety of nice adaptation.

Samuel Johnson, 1779, *Abraham Cowley, Lives of the English Poets*

To speak of this neglected writer, as a poet. He had a quick and ready conception; the true enthusiasm of genius, and vast materials, with which learning as well as fancy had supplied him for it to work upon. He had besides a prodigious command of expression, and a natural and copious flow of eloquence on every occasion, and understood our language in all its force and energy. Yet betwixt the native exuberance of his wit, which hurried him frequently on conceits, and the epidemical contagion of that time, which possessed all writers with the love of points, of affected turns, and hard unnatural allusion, there are few of his poems which a man of just taste will read with admiration, or even with pleasure. Some few there are and enough to save his name from oblivion, or rather to consecrate it, with those of the master spirits of our country, to immortality.

Richard Hurd, 1808(?), *Commonplace Book,* ed. Kilvert, p. 240

Cowley was coarsely curious: he went to the shamoles for his chambers of imagery, and very often through the mud. All which faults appear to us attributable to his coldness of temperament, and his defectiveness in the instinct towards Beauty; to having the intellect only of a great poet, not the sensibility. . . . Yet his influence was for good rather than for evil, by inciting to a struggle backward, a delay in the revolutionary movement: and this, although a wide gulf yawned between him and the former age, and his heart's impulse was not strong enough to cast him across it. For his actual influence, he lifts us up and casts us down—charms, and goes nigh to disgust us—does all but make us love and weep.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 1842-63, *The Book of the Poets*

His imagination is tinsel, or mere surface gilding, compared to Donne's solid gold; his wit little better than word-catching, to the profound meditative quaintness of the elder poet; and of passion, with which all Donne's finest lines are tremulous, Cowley has none. Considerable grace and dignity occasionally distinguish his Pindaric Odes (which, however, are Pindaric only in name); and he has shown much elegant playfulness of style and fancy in his translations from and imitations of Anacreon, and in some other verses written in the same manner. As for what he intends for love verses, some of them are pretty enough frostwork; but the only sort of love there is in them is the love of point and sparkle.

George L. Craik, 1861, *A Compendious History of English Literature and of the English Language,* vol. II, p. 99

Except for a few students like Lamb and Sir Egerton Brydges, Cowley's verse is in this century unread and unreadable. Not even the antiquarian curiosity of an age which reprints Brathwaite and Crowne has yet availed to present him in a new edition. The reasons of this extraordinary decline in a poetical reputation are not difficult to find; Dryden absorbed all that was best in Cowley, and superseded him for the readers of the eighteenth century, and the nineteenth century, which reads Dryden little, naturally reads Cowley less. Yet criticism has to justify great names. There must be something in a man who was regarded by his age, and that an age which boasted of having outgrown all illusions, as the most profound and ingenious of its writers.

Thomas Humphry Ward, 1880, *English Poets,* vol. II, p. 235

JEREMY TAYLOR
1613-1667

Jeremy Taylor, *Bishop of Down, Connor and Dronmore,* 1613-1667. Born, at Cambridge, 15 Aug. 1613. At Cambridge Free School, 1616-26. Sizar, Gonville and Caius Coll., Camb., 18 Aug. 1626; matric., 17 March 1627; B. A., 1631; M. A., 1634; Incorp. Fellow of All Souls Coll., Oxford, 20 Oct. 1635. Ordained chaplain to Archbishop Laud. Chaplain to Charles I., 1638. Rector of Uppingham, 1638-42. Married Phoebe Landisdale, 27 May 1639. Created D. D. from Brasenose Coll. Oxford, 1 Nov. 1642. With the King, as Chaplain, during Civil War. Kept a school in Wales, with W. Nicholson and W. Wyatt, 1646-47. Chaplain to Earl of Carbery, at Golden Grove, Carmarthenshire, 1647-57. Settled in Ireland, as Rector of Lisburn and Portmore, 1658. Bishop of Down and Connor, Jan. 1661. Privy Councillor, Ireland, Feb. 1661. Bishop of Dronmore, June 1661. Vice-Chancellor, Dublin Univ., 1661. Died, at Lisburn, 13 Aug. 1667. Buried in Dronmore Cathedral. WORKS: *A Sermon preached . . . in Oxford,*

upon the Anniversary of the Gunpowder Treason, 1638; *Of the Sacred Order and Offices of Episcopacy,* 1642; *A Disclosure Concerning Prayer Extempore* (anon.), 1646; *A New and Easie Institution of Grammar,* 1647; Θεολια 'Εκλεκτικη, 1647; *Treatises* (4 pts.), 1648; *An Apology for . . . set forms of Liturgie,* 1649; *The Great Exemplar,* 1649; *The Martyrdom of King Charles I.,* 1649; *Sermon at Funeral of Frances, Countess of Carbery,* 1650; *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living,* 1650; *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying,* 1651; *Twenty-eight Sermons,* 1651; *A Short Cathechism* (anon.), 1652; *A Discourse of Baptism,* 1652; *The Real Presence,* 1654; *'Ενιαυτος* (3 pts.), 1653-55; *The Golden Grove* (anon.), 1655; *Unum Necessarium,* 1655; *Deus Justificatus,* 1656; *An Answer to a Letter written by the Bishop of Rochester,* 1656; *A Discourse of Auxiliary Beauty* (anon.), 1656; *A Discourse of . . . Friendship* (under initials: J. T., D. D.), 1657 (2nd edn., called: *The Measure and Offices of Friendship,* same year); Συμβολον'Ηθικη-Πολεμικον, 1657; *The Ephesian Matron* (anon.), 1659; *Ductor Dubitantium,* 1660; *The Worthy Communicant,* 1660; *Sermon preached at the Consecration of two Archbishops, etc.,* 1661; *Rules and Advices to the Clergy of Down and Connor,* 1661; *A Sermon preached at the Opening of Parliament,* 1661; *Via Intelligentiæ,* 1662; *Sermon preached at the Funeral of the Archbishop of Armagh,* 1663; *'Εβδομας 'Εμβολιμαιος* (6 pts.,) 1661-63; *A Dissuasive from Popery,* 1664; (3rd edn. same year); *Second Part* of preceding, 1667. Posthumous: Συμβολον Θεολογικον, 1673-74; *Christ's Yoke an Easy Yoke,* 1675; *Contemplations of the State of Man,* 1684; *A Discourse on the Lord's Supper,* 1792. He *edited*: *The Psalter of David,* 1644. Collected Works: in 15 vols., ed. by Bishop Heber, 1822. *Life:* by H. K. Bonney, 1815.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 275

See: *Poems and Verse-Translations,* ed. A. B. Grosart, 1870; C. J. Stranks, *The Life and Writings of Jeremy Taylor,* 1952; H. Trevor Hughes, *The Piety of Jeremy Taylor,* 1960.

Personal

To these advantages of nature, and excellency of his spirit, he added an indefatigable industry, and God gave a plentiful benediction; for there were very few kinds of learning but he was a *mystes* and a great master in them. He was a rare Humanist, and hugely versed in all the polite parts of Learning, and thoroughly concocted all the antient Moralists, Greek and Roman Poets and Orators, and was not unacquainted with the refined wits of the latter ages, whether French or Italian. . . . This great prelate had the good humour of a gentleman, the eloquence of an orator, the fancy of a poet, the acuteness of a Schoolman, the profoundness of a Philosopher, the wisdom of a Counsellor, the sagacity of a Prophet, the reason of an angel, and the piety of a Saint: he had devotion enough for a Cloister, learning enough for an University, and wit enough for a College of Virtuosi: and, had his parts and endowments been parcelled out among his poor Clergy that he

left behind him, it would, perhaps, have made one of the best diocesses in the world.

George Rust, 1667, *Funeral Sermon*

He was esteemed by the generality of persons a compleat artist, accurate logician, exquisite, quick and acute in his reasonings, a person of great fluency in his language and of prodigious readiness in his learning. A noted Presbyterian [Hen. Jeanes, in his Epist. to the Reader before Certain Letters between him and Jer. Taylor, 1660, fol.] also (his antagonist) doth ingeniously confess that Dr. Taylor is a man of admirable wit, great parts, hath a quick and elegant pen, is of abilities in critical learning and of profound skill in antiquity.

Anthony Wood, 1691-1721, *Athenæ Oxonienses,* vol. II, f. 401

Those who have looked at Taylor's portraits will have been struck by the beauty and grace of his personal appearance. There is a ripe and somewhat soft freshness of health in his face, "with his hair long and gracefully curling on his cheeks, large dark eyes full of sweetness, an aquiline nose," and an open earnest expression. He is said not to have been without consciousness of his personal beauty, and to have frequently introduced his portraits in different attitudes in his various writings.

John Tulloch, 1872, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy in England in the Seventeenth Century,* vol. I, p. 371

Holy Living and Holy Dying (1650-51)

His *Holy Living and Dying* is a divine pastoral. He writes to the faithful followers of Christ, as the shepherd pipes to his flock. He introduces touching and heartfelt appeals to familiar life; condescends to men of low estate; and his pious page blushes with modesty and beauty. His style is prismatic. It unfolds the colours of the rainbow; it floats like the bubble through the air; it is like innumerable dew-drops that glitter on the face of morning, and tremble as they glitter. He does not dig his way underground, but slides upon ice, borne on the winged car of fancy. The dancing light he throws upon objects is like an Aurora Borealis, playing betwixt heaven and earth.

William Hazlitt, 1820, *Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*

His masterpiece. A series of sermons in simple paragraphs, eloquent and persuasive, exhorting to an upright and holy life. It has been a popular book even to the present time. All of Taylor's writings are marred by the style

prevalent in his time, but accentuated and exaggerated by him; Latinized, but careless, florid, gorgeous, rapid, opulent of words.

Fred Parker Emery, 1896, *Notes on English Literature*, p. 42

Even Jeremy Taylor suffers from the imperfections of contemporary taste. His unction is too long-drawn, his graces too elaborate and gorgeous, and modern readers turn from the sermons which his own age thought so consummate in their beauty to those more colloquial treatises of Christian exposition and exhortation of which the *Holy Living* and the *Holy Dying* are the types.

Edmund Gosse, 1897, *Short History of Modern English Literature*, p. 152

Sermons

It is generally admitted that the literary genius of Taylor is seen at its best in his sermons. A passage in a sermon by South (30 April 1668) is evidently aimed at the pulpit style of Taylor, whose "starched similitudes" he caricatures. But while Taylor's imagination travels far and wide, takes daring flights, and again treads homely ground, he employs his gift in real elucidation of his point; and by the vividness of his own conceptions redeems from commonplace the preacher's most obvious themes. Apart from the play of fancy, the singular neatness of his workmanship gives beauty to his writing. The appalling length of his periods is very much a matter of punctuation. His style is not involved; few writers have been better artists in clear and striking sentences. It is true that he is wanting in some of the higher qualities of eloquence. He arrests and delights rather than moves his reader, for he is not himself carried away. In the midst of splendours he never rises into passion, and bounds his meaning with even cautious care. In his piety there is little fervour, but all his writings give the deep impression of a chastened and consecrated spirit of devotion.

Alexander Gordon, 1898, *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. LV, p. 428

General

We see the Reverend Doctor's Treatises standing, as it were, in the front of this order of authors, and as the foremost of those *Good Books* used by the politest and most refined *Devotees* of either sex. They maintain the principal place in the study of almost every elegant and high *Divine*. They stand in folios and other volumes, adorned with variety of pictures, gildings, and other decorations, on the advanced shelves or glass cupboards of the *ladies'*

closets. They are in use at all seasons, and for all places; as well for church service as closet-preparation; and, in short, may vie with any devotional books in *British Christendom.*

Earl of Shaftesbury (Anthony Ashby Cooper), 1711,
Characteristics of Men, Manners, and Opinions, vol. III

In learning he was scarcely inferior to any theologian whatever; and in richness of imagination he is superior to all. On the subject of original sin, and of the justification of man before God, his sentiments differed from those of the established church of which he was a member; but on other points of Christian verity his views were generally correct. He is one of those few authors "the dust of whose works is gold"; and as long as the English language is understood, his volumes will constitute some of its choicest treasures. Through the whole of his numerous writings the flame of genius and of devotion burns with unabated and unexampled strength.

Edward Williams, 1800-43, *The Christian Preacher,*
5th ed., p. 363

There is in any one of the prose folios of Jeremy Taylor more fine fancy and original imagery—more brilliant conceptions and glowing expressions—more new figures, and new applications of old figures—more, in short, of the body and the soul of poetry, than in all the odes and the epics that have since been produced in Europe.

Francis, Lord Jeffrey, 1811-44, *Contributions to the Edinburgh Review,* vol. II, p. 287

Jeremy Taylor was a writer as different from Sir Thomas Browne as it was possible for one writer to be from another. He was a dignitary of the church, and except in matters of casuistry and controverted points, could not be supposed to enter upon speculative doubts, or give a loose to a sort of dogmatical scepticism. He had less thought, less "stuff of the conscience," less "to give us pause," in his impetuous oratory, but he had equal fancy—not the same vastness and profundity, but more richness and beauty, more warmth and tenderness. He is as rapid, as flowing and endless, as the other is stately, abrupt, and concentrated. The eloquence of the one is like a river, that of the other is more like an aqueduct. The one is as sanguine as the other is saturnine in the temper of his mind. Jeremy Taylor took obvious and admitted truths for granted, and illustrated them with an inexhaustible display of new and enchanting imagery. Sir Thomas Browne talks in sum-totals: Jeremy Taylor enumerates all the particulars of a subject. He gives every aspect it will bear, and never "cloys with sameness." His characteristic is enthusiastic and delightful amplification. Sir Thomas Browne gives the

beginning and end of things, that you may judge of their place and magnitude: Jeremy Taylor describes their qualities and texture, and enters into all the items of the debtor and creditor account between life and death, grace and nature, faith and good works. He puts his heart into his fancy. He does not pretend to annihilate the passions and pursuits of mankind in the pride of philosophic indifference, but treats them as serious and momentous things, warring with conscience and the soul's health, or furnishing the means of grace and hopes of glory. In his writings, the frail stalk of human life reclines on the bosom of eternity.

William Hazlitt, 1820, *Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*

Taylor was the most eloquent of men, and the most facile of orators. Laden with thought, his books are read for their sweet and deep devotion (a quality which also belonged to his fellow-writer, Lancelot Andrewes), even more than for their impassioned and convoluted outbreaks of beautiful words.

Stopford A. Brooke, 1896, *English Literature*, p. 153

GEORGE WITHER
1588-1667

Born, at Bentworth, Hants, 11 June 1588. Early education at a school at Colemore. Matric. Magdalen Coll., Oxford, 1604(?). Left Oxford after about three years. Imprisoned for libel, 1614. Student of Lincoln's Inn, 1615. Served as Captain in cavalry regiment under Charles I., 1639. Served in Parliamentary Army, 1642; obtained rank of Major. Governor of Farnham Castle, Oct. to Dec., 1642. J. P. for Hampshire, Surrey and Essex, 1642-58. Major-General of Forces in Surrey, 1643(?). Master of the Statute Office, 1655 (?). Imprisoned for libel, March 1662 to 1665. Died, in London, 2 May 1667. Buried in thte Savoy Church. Works: *Prince Henrie's Obsequies*, 1612; *Epithalamia*, 1612; *Abuses Stript and Whipt*, 1613; *A Satyre, dedicated to His Most Excellent Majestie*, 1614; *The Shepheard's Hunting*, 1615; *Fidelia*, 1617; *A Preparation to the Psalter*, 1619; *Workes*, 1620; *Exercises upon the first Psalme*, 1620; *The Songs of the Old Testament*, 1621; *Wither's Motto*, 1621; *Juvenilia*, 1622; *Faire-Virtue*, 1622; *The Hymnes and Songs of the Church*, 1623; *The Scholler's Purgatory*, [1625?] *Britain's Remembrance*, 1628; *The Psalmes of David translated into Lyrick verse*, 1632; *Collection of Emblemes*, 1634-35; *Read and Wonder* (anon.; ascribed to Wither), 1641; *Halelujah*, 1641; *Campo-Musæ*, 1643; *Se Defendo* [1643]; *Mercurius Rusticus* (anon.), 1643; *The Speech without Doore*, 1644; *The Two Incomparable Generalissimos*, 1644; *Letters of Advice*, 1645 [1644]; *Vox Pacifica*, 1645; *The Great Assizes holden in Parnassus* (anon.), 1645; *The Speech without Doore defended*, 1646; *Justiciarus Justificatus*, 1646; *What Peace to the Wicked?* (anon.), 1646; *Opobalsamum Anglicanum*, 1646; *Major Wither's Dis-*

claimer, 1647; *Carmen Expostulatorium,* 1647; *Amygdale Britannica* (anon.), 1647; *Prosopopœia Britannica,* 1648; *Carmen Eucharisticon,* 1649; *Respublica Anglicana,* 1650; *The British Appeals,* 1651; *Three Grains of Spiritual Frankincense,* 1651; *The Dark Lantern,* 1653; *Westrow Revived,* 1653; *Vaticinum Casuale,* 1655; *Rapture at the Protector's Recovery,* 1655; *Three Private Meditations,* 1655; *The Protector,* 1655; *Boni Ominis Votum,* 1656; *A Suddain Flash* (anon.), 1657; *Salt upon Salt,* 1659; *A Cordial Confection,* 1659; *Epistolium Vagum-Prosa-Metricum,* 1659; *Petition and Narrative* [1659]; *Furor Poeticus,* 1660; *Speculum Speculativum,* 1660; *Fides-Anglicana,* 1660; *An Improvement of Imprisonment,* 1661; *A Triple Paradox,* 1661; *The Prisoner's Plea,* 1661; *A Proclamation in the Name of the King of Kings,* 1662; *Verses Intended to the King's Majesty,* 1662; *Parallellogrammaton,* 1662; *Tuba Pacifica,* 1664; *A Memorandum to London,* 1665; *Meditations upon the Lord's Prayer,* 1665; *Echoes from the Sixth Trumpet* [1666]; *Sighs for the Pitchers,* 1666; *Vaticina Poetica,* 1666. POSTHUMOUS: *Divine Poems on the Ten Commandments,* ed. by his daughter, 1688. He *translated:* Nemesius' *The Nature of Man,* 1636. COLLECTED WORKS: *Poems,* ed. by H. Morley, 1891.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 302

SEE: *Poetry,* ed. Frank Sidgwick, 1902, 2 v.; *The History of the Pestilence,* ed. J. Milton French, 1932.

PERSONAL

In the time of the civill warres, George Withers, the poet, begged Sir John Denham's estate at Egham of the Parliament, in whose cause he was a captaine of horse. It (happened) that G. W. was taken prisoner, and was in danger of his life, having written severely against the king, &c. Sir John Denham went to the king, and desired his majestie not to hang him, for that whilest G. W. lived he should not be the worst poet in England.

John Aubrey, 1669-96, *Brief Lives,* ed. Clark, vol. I, p. 221

At this day it is hard to discover what parts in the poem here particularly alluded to, *Abuses Stript and Whipt,* could have occasioned the imprisonment of the author. Was Vice in High Places more suspicious than now? had she more power; or more leisure to listen after ill reports? That a man should be convicted of a libel when he named no names but Hate and Envy, and Lust, and Avarice, is like one of the indictments in the *Pilgrim's Progress,* where Faithful is arraigned for having "railed on our noble Prince Beelzebub, and spoken contemptibly of his honourable friends, the Lord Old Man, the Lord Carnel Delight, and the Lord Luxurious." What unlucky jealousy could have tempted the great men of those days to appropriate such innocent abstractions to themselves! Wither seems to have contemplated to a degree of idolatry his own possible virtue. He is for ever anticipating persecution and martyrdom; fingering, as it were, the flames, to try

how he can bear them. Perhaps his premature defiance sometimes made him obnoxious to censures, which he would otherwise have slipped by.

Charles Lamb, 1818, *George Wither's Poetical Works*

Wither was no exception to the general rule that those who abandon for public life the studies of poetry and philosophy suffer a steady degeneration, partaking like brooks and rivers, as Landor finely says, "the nature of that vast body whereunto they run, its dreariness, its bitterness, its foam, its storms, its everlasting noise and commotion." Not that Wither ever became quite the fanatic that he has been represented to have been. . . . His own charitableness was considerably tempered by an ineradicable contentiousness. He lived under eleven different forms of government, and he managed to be more or less at loggerheads with them all.

John Fyvie, 1890, "George Wither," *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. 62, p. 44

General

George Wither, a most profuse pourer forth of English rhime, not without great pretence to a poetical zeal against the vices of his times, in his *Motto,* his *Remembrancer,* and other such like satirical works. . . . But the most of poetical fancy which I remember to have found in any of his writings is a little piece of pastoral poetry called "The Shepherd's Huntings."

Edward Phillips, 1675, *Theatrum Poetarum Anglicanorum*

This beautiful old song ["The Shepherd's Resolution"] was written by a poet, whose name would have been utterly forgotten, if it had not been preserved by Swift, as a term of contempt. "Dryden and Wither" are coupled by him like the "Bavius and Mævius" of Virgil. Dryden however has had justice done him by posterity: and as for Wither, though of subordinate merit, that he was not altogether devoid of genius, will be judged from the following stanzas. The truth is, Wither was a very voluminous party-writer: had as his political and satirical strokes rendered him extremely popular in his lifetime: so afterwards, when these were no longer relished, they totally consigned his writings to oblivion.

Thomas Percy, 1765, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, p. 381

Amongst his numerous verses, which he seems to have scribbled with endless profusion, and with a total disregard to the art of blotting, there are entire compositions, which could not have proceeded, but from one, who was endowed with a strong poetical spirit. In those instances he is generally characterized by an easy elegance, and a copiousness of unaffected senti-

ment. A man of real taste, who has an opportunity of comparing all his publications, many of which can now seldom be met with, would do an acceptable service to the literary world, by giving a judicious selection from them.

Samuel Egerton Brydges, 1806, *Censura Literaria,* Preface, vol. II, p. x

George Wither, by siding with the less poetical though more prosperous party in the civil war, and by a profusion of temporary writings to serve the ends of faction and folly, has left a name which we were accustomed to despise, till Ellis did justice to "that playful fancy, pure taste, and artless delicacy of sentiment, which distinguish the poetry of his early youth." His best poems were published in 1622, with the title, *Mistress of Philarete.* Some of them are highly beautiful, and bespeak a mind above the grovelling Puritanism into which he afterwards fell. I think there is hardly any thing in our lyric poetry of this period equal to Wither's lines on his Muse, published by Ellis.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe,* pt. iii, ch. v, par. 54

It is somewhat difficult to tell the student what may be considered the chief production of George Wither. His "Shepheards' Hunting" is generally associated with his name. But he was the author of more than a hundred works besides, the collection together of which no one has as yet been found sufficiently courageous to undertake. Very many of these productions are of a political nature. He was also the author of a number of religious pieces, of some very graceful songs and poems, and of some very biting satires under the title *Abuses Stript and Whipt. Britain's Remembrancer* is a long and able poem, written by him in London, during the plague of 1627, and is by some considered the most valuable of all his writings.

James Hain Friswell, 1869, *Essays on English Writers,* p. 76

The time has passed when this voluminous writer can be treated by any competent critic with the contempt of the age of Anne. The scorn of Pope still clings, however, to the "wretched Withers," whose name is misspelt, and of whose works he had probably seen nothing but the satires. Nor would it be safe, on the score of exquisite beauties discoverable in the early lyrics of Wither, to overlook the radical faults of his style. One or two generous appreciators of Jacobean verse have done this, and have claimed for Wither a very high place in English poetry. But proportion, judgment, taste must count for something, and in these qualities this lyrist was deplorably deficient. The careful student, not of excerpts made by loving and

partial hands, but of the bulk of his published writings, will be inclined to hesitate before he admits that Wither was a great poet. He will rather call him a very curious and perhaps unique instance of a tiresome and verbose scribbler, to whom in his youth there came unconsidered flashes of most genuine and exquisite poetry.

Edmund Gosse, 1894, *The Jacobean Poets*, p. 181

THE LATER SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

ROBERT HERRICK
1591-1674

Born, in London, July(?) 1591; baptized, 24 Aug. Probably educated at Westminster School and at St. John's Coll., Camb. Removed to Trinity Hall, 1616; B. A., 1617; M. A., 1620. Rector of Dean Prior, Devonshire, 2 Oct. 1629 to 1647. Deprived of living, 1647; returned to London. Restored to living, 24 Aug. 1662. Died, at Dean Prior, Oct. 1674; buried in Dean Prior church, 15 Oct. WORKS: "King Obron's Feast" (anon., in *A Description of the King and Queene of Fayries*), 1635; "His Mistris Shade" (anon.; in Shakespeare's *Poems*), 1640; *Hesperides* (with *Noble Numbers,* 1648; Poems in *Lacrymæ Musarum,* 1649; Poems in *Witt's Recreations,* 1650. COLLECTED WORKS: ed. by Lord Dundrennan (2 vols.), 1823; by Grosart (3 vols.), 1876; by A. W. Pollard, 1891; by Saintsbury (2 vols.), 1893.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 132

SEE: *Poetical Works,* ed. F. W. Moorman, 1915; *Poetical Works,* ed. L. C. Martin, 1956, rev. 1965 (OSA); *Complete Poetry,* ed. J. Max Patrick, 1963; F. W. Moorman, *Herrick: A Biographical and Critical Study,* 1910.

PERSONAL

Being in Devonshire during the last summer, we took an opportunity of visiting Dean Prior, for the purpose of making some inquiries concerning Herrick, who, from the circumstance of having been vicar of that parish (where he is still talked of as a poet, a wit, and a hater of the county), for twenty years, might be supposed to have left some unrecorded memorials of his existence behind him. We found many persons in the village who could repeat some of his lines. . . . The person, however, who knows more of Herrick than all the rest of the neighbourhood, we found to be a poor woman in the ninety-ninth year of her age, named Dorothy King. She repeated to us, with great exactness, five of his "Noble Numbers," among which was the beautiful Litany. These she had learned from her mother, who was apprenticed to Herrick's successor in the vicarage. She called them her prayers, which, she said, she was in the habit of putting up in bed, whenever she could not sleep: and she therefore began the Litany at the second stanza,

"When I lie within my bed," &c.

Another of her midnight orisons was the poem beginning

"Every night thou dost me fright,
And keep mine eyes from sleeping," &c.

She had no idea that these poems had ever been printed, and could not have read them if she had seen them. She is in possession of few traditions as to the person, manners, and habits of life of the poet; but in return, she has a whole budget of anecdotes respecting his ghost; and these she details with a careless but serene gravity, which one would not willingly discompose by any hints at a remote possibility of their not being exactly true. Herrick, she says, was a bachelor, and kept a maid-servant, as his poems, indeed, discover; but she adds, what they do not discover, that he also kept a pet-pig, which he taught to drink out of a tankard. And this important circumstance, together with a tradition that he one day threw his sermon at the congregation, with a curse for their inattention, forms almost the sum total of what we could collect of the poet's life.

Barron Field, 1810, "Select Poems from Herrick, Carew, etc.", *The Quarterly Review*, vol. IV, pp. 171, 172

This fine old fellow, this joyous heart, who lived to be eighty-three, in spite of "dull Devonshire" and the bad times, wrote almost as much as Carew, Lovelace, and Suckling united, and how much there is in his weed-choked garden, which is comparable with their best compositions! How little we know of him! how scantily he has been realized to us! Could we but raise up for a summer afternoon the Devonshire which he lived in, and the people with whom he mixed or summon the ghost of faithful Prudence Baldwin, we might be furnished with inspiration to do something better than the bare sketch which follows.

William Carew Hazlitt 1869, ed. *Hesperides*, Preface, vol. I, p. viii

The same sensuous feeling which made him invest his friends with the perfume of Juno or Isis, sing of their complexions as roses overspread with lawn, compare their lips to cherries, and praise their silver feet, had also its other side. The unlucky wights who incurred the poet's wrath were treated in a fashion equally offensive to good taste and good manners. Nor are these gruesome epigrams the only apples in the garden of Herrick's *Hesperides* which have affronted the taste of modern readers. The epigrams indeed, if apples at all, are rather the dusty apples of the Dea Sea than the pleasant fruit of the Western Isles; but Herrick's "Epithalamia," odes whose sustained splendour gives them a high rank among his poems, because they sing of other marriage-rites than those of rice and slipper, have also tended to restrict the circle of his readers in an age which prides itself on its modesty. Hence it has come about that while the names of the lovely ladies

of the poet's imagination,—Julia, Dianeme, Electra, Perilla—are widely known, those of the men and women whom Herrick treasured as his friends are all but forgotten.

Alfred W. Pollard, 1892, "Herrick and his Friends," *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. 67, p. 142

Whether or not the bovine features in Marshall's engraving are a libel on the poet, it is to be regretted that oblivion has not laid its erasing finger on that singularly unpleasant counterfeit presentment. . . . The aggressive face bestowed upon him by the artist lends an air of veracity to the tradition that the vicar occasionally hurled the manuscript of his sermon at the heads of his drowsy parishioners, accompanying the missive with pregnant remarks. He has the aspect of one meditating assault and battery. To offset the picture there is much indirect testimony to the amiability of the man, aside from the evidence furnished by his own writings. . . . I picture him as a sort of Samuel Pepys, with perhaps less quaintness, and the poetical temperament added. Like the prince of gossips, too, he somehow gets at your affections.

Thomas Bailey Aldrich, 1900, *Poems of Robert Herrick*, Introduction, pp. xxvii, xxviii, xxx

Hesperides (1648)

I sing of brooks, of blossoms, birds and bowers,
Of April, May, of June and July-flowers;
I sing of may-poles, hock-carts, wassails, wakes,
Of bridegrooms, brides, and of their bridal-cakes;
I write of youth, of love, and have access
By these to sing of cleanly wantonness;
I sing of dews, of rains, and piece by piece,
Of balm, of oil, of spice, and ambergris;
I sing of times trans-shifting; and I write
How roses first came red and lilies white.
I write of groves, of twilights, and I sing
The Court of Mab and of the Fairie King;
I write of Hell; I sing, and ever shall,
Of Heaven, and hope to have it after all.

Robert Herrick, 1648, "The Argument of His Book," *Hesperides*, p. 3

Herrick alone, with imperturbable serenity, continued to pipe out his pastoral ditties, and crown his head with daffodils, when England was torn to pieces with the most momentous struggle for liberty in her annals. To the poetic student he is, therefore, of especial interest, as a genuine specimen

of an artist, pure and simple. Herrick brought out the *Hesperides* a few months before the King was beheaded, and people were invited to listen to little madrigals upon Julia's stomacher at the singularly inopportune moment when the eyes of the whole nation were bent on the unprecedented phenomenon of the proclamation of an English republic. To find a parallel to such unconsciousness we must come down to our own time, and recollect that Théophile Gautier took occasion of the siege of Paris to revise and republish his *Emaux et Camées.*

Edmund Gosse, 1883, *Seventeenth-Century Studies,* p. 114

In the quiet of his parsonage, the music of his life found utterance in every mood. His whole mind expressed itself, animal and spiritual. In the texture of his book he evidently meant to show the warp and woof of life. He aimed at effects of contrast that belonged to the true nature of man, in whom, as in the world at large, "the strawberry grows underneath the nettle," and side by side with promptings of the flesh, spring up the aspirations of the spirit. Even the dainty fairy pieces written under influence of the same fashion that caused Shakespeare to describe Queen Mab and Drayton to write his Nymphidia, even such pieces of his, written in earlier days, Herrick sprinkled about his volume in fragments. He would not make his nosegay with the flowers of each sort bunched together in so many lumps. There is truth in the close contact of a playful sense of ugliness with the most delicate perception of all forms of beauty. Herrick's "epigrams" on running eyes and rotten teeth, and the like, are such exaggerations as may often have tumbled out spontaneously, in the course of playful talk, and if they pleased him well enough were duly entered in his book. In a healthy mind, this whimsical sense of deformity may be but the other side of a fine sense of beauty.

Henry Morley, 1884, ed. *Hesperides (Morley's Universal Library),* p. 7

General

One of the Scholars of Apollo of the middle Form, yet something above *George Withers,* in a pretty Flowry and Pastoral Gale of Fancy, in a vernal Prospect of some Hill, Cave, Rock, or Fountain; which but for the interruption of other trivial Passages, might have made up none of the worst Poetick Landskips.

William Winstanley, 1668, *The Lives of the Most Famous English Poets*

Had Herrick adopted any arrangement or classification for his poetry, it would probably have experienced a kinder fate. The reader would then have

had the opportunity of choosing the department most congenial to his taste, and without incurring the risk of being seduced into the perusal of matter offensive to his feelings. At present, so injudiciously are the contents of his volume disposed, and so totally divested of order and propriety, that it would almost seem the poet wished to pollute and bury his best effusions in a mass of nonsense and obscenity. Nine persons out of ten who should casually dip into the collection, would, in all probability, after glancing over a few trifling epigrams, throw it down with indignation, little apprehending it contained many pieces of a truly moral and pathetic, and of an exquisitely rural and descriptive, strain.

Nathan Drake, 1798, *Literary Hours,* vol. III, No. xliiv

A coarse-minded and beastly writer, whose dunghill, when the few flowers that grew therein had been transplanted, ought never to have been disturbed. Those flowers indeed are beautiful and perennial; but they should have been removed from the filth and ordure in which they are embedded.

Robert Southey, 1831, *Lives of Uneducated Poets,* p. 85

Without the exuberant gayety of Suckling, or perhaps the delicacy of Carew, he is sportive, fanciful, and generally of polished language. The faults of his age are sometimes apparent: though he is not often obscure, he runs, more perhaps for the sake of variety than any other cause, into occasional pedantry. He has his conceits and false thoughts; but these are more than redeemed by the numerous very little poems (for those of Herrick are frequently not longer than epigrams), which may be praised without much more qualification than belongs to such poetry.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe,* pt. iii, ch. v

The Ariel of poets, sucking "where the bee sucks" from the roseheart of nature, and reproducing the fragrance idealized.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 1842-63, *The Book of the Poets*

He sings well chiefly when he sings of love, but this love is not of the kind which inspires our greatest poets. He is enamoured with the accessories of a woman's beauty—the colour of a ribbon, the flaunting of a ringlet, with "a careless shoe-string," or the wave of a petticoat. The charms he sees in his mistress are likened to precious stones, and all the treasures of the lapidary are represented in his verse. There are few traces of tenderness in Herrick and none of passion; it is probable that every pretty girl he saw suggested a pretty fancy. To judge from his own saying, "no man at one

time can be wise and love." Herrick was not wise. If we may trust his verses, the poet was perennially in love, chiefly with Julia, "prime of all," but warmly too with Anthea, Lucia, Corinna, and Perilla. Making love is in Herrick's eyes a charming amusement, and the more love-making the more poetry. If Julia prove unkind, he can solace himself with Sappho; and if Sappho be perverse, some other mistress will charm him with her "pretty witchcrafts."

John Dennis, 1883, *Heroes of Literature,* p. 97

None of our English lyric poets has shown a more perfect sense of words and of their musical efficiency, none has united so exquisitely a classic sense of form to that impulsive tunefulness which we have come to consider as essentially English. In his earlier lyrics Herrick has perhaps more of this impulse, but it served him with the same youthful freshness to the last. . . . It is the way in which Herrick adds to and completes this natural lyrical impulse by the further grace of verse taught by the Latin verse-writers and their English disciples, that makes him so consummate an artist within his range. . . . There is magic in these lyrics, that indefinable quality, born of the spirit, which can alone avail in the end to make poetry live.

Ernest Rhys, 1887, *Hesperides: Poems by Robert Herrick,* Introduction, pp. xxxi, xxxii, xxxiii

In Herrick the air is fragrant with newmown hay; there is a morning light upon all things; long shadows streak the grass, and on the eglantine swinging in the hedge the dew lies white and brilliant. Out of the happy distance comes a shrill and silvery sound of whetting scythes; and from the near brook-side rings the laughter of merry maids in circle to make cowslipballs and babble of their bachelors.

William Ernest Henley, 1890, *Views and Reviews,* p. 112

Herrick was practically forgotten until Nichols in 1796-97 drew attention to his poetry in the *Gentleman's Magazine.* Nichols was followed by Dr. Nathan Drake, who devoted some papers to Herrick in *Literary Hours;* and in 1810 Dr. Nott published *Select Poems from the "Hesperides,"* which was reviewed by Barron Field in the *Quarterly Review,* August 1810. In 1823 a complete edition, in two volumes, worthily edited by Thomas Maitland, lord Dundrennan, was published at Edinburgh, the "remainder" copies being issued (with a fresh title-page) by William Pickering in 1825. Pickering's edition of 1846 contains a memoir by S. W. Singer; an edition by Mr. Edward Walford was published in 1859; Mr. W. Carew Hazlitt's edition, 1869, 2 vols., has additional information of interest; and there is

a valuable edition by Dr. Grosart, 3 vols., 1876. Selections from Herrick have been edited by Professor F. T. Palgrave and others.

A. H. Bullen, 1891, *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. XXVI, p. 254

The passing of the glory of the world is continually filling his eyes with tears, which overflow in pearls that drop within his book. There are people—surely they must have lived in a monastery or a vacuum—who are always puzzled that the men who do these exquisite things in poetry should be sensuous, let us say sensual, in their lives; but apart from the many-sidedness of man, it is surely the sensuous man alone who is capable of these rich tearful moments. One must have lived to have lost, and Herrick lived as generously as Solomon, and his poems are a sort of Restoration Ecclesiastes, with less of the whine and a kinder heart. Yet his *Noble Numbers*, or his *Pious Pieces*, though at first they strike one somewhat ludicrously as coming from him, are no mere "making it right" with the powers above—they are the result of the real religious devotion which was at the bottom of Herrick's as of every other poet's heart.

Richard Le Gallienne, 1891-95, *Retrospective Reviews*, vol. I, p. 3

JOHN MILTON
1608-1674

John Milton, 1608-1674. Born, in London, 9 Dec. 1608. At St. Paul's School, 1620(?)-25. Pensioner of Christ's Coll. Camb., 12 Feb. 1625; matric. 9 April 1625; B. A., 26 March 1629; M. A., 3 July 1632. Lived with his father at Horton, Bucks., July 1632 to April 1638. Travelled on continent, April 1638 to July 1639. On his return, settled in London and took pupils. Took active part in ecclesiastical controversy, 1641-42. Married (i.) Mary Powell, May (?) 1643; separated from her shortly afterwards; reconciled, 1645. Latin Secretary to Council of State, March 1649. Became blind, 1650. Wife died, 1652. Married (ii.) Catharine Woodcock, 12 Nov. 1656; she died, Feb. 1658. At Restoration, was arrested for treasonable publications, summer 1660; released soon afterwards. Married (iii.) Elizabeth Minshull, 24 Feb. 1663. Died, in London, 8 Nov. 1674. Buried in St. Giles's, Cripplegate. Works: *A Masque ("Comus") presented at Ludlow Castle* (anon.), *Lycidas* in *Justa Edouardo King Naufrago*, 1638; *Of Reformation touching Church Discipline in England* (anon.), 1644; *Of Prelatical Episcopacy* (anon.), 1641; *Animadversions upon the Remonstrat's Defence against Smectymnuus* (anon.), 1641; *The Archbishop of Canterburie's Dream* (anon.), 1641; *The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelaty*, 1641; *Tyrannicall Government anatomized* (anon.), 1642; *An Apology against . . .*

"A Modest Confutation of the Animadversions" (anon.), 1642; *News From Hell* (anon.), 1642; *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (anon.), 1643; *Of Education* (anon.), (1644), *Areopagitica,* 1644; *Tetrachordon,* 1645; *Colasterion* (anon.), 1645; *Poems,* 1645; *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (under initials: J. M.), 1649; *Observations on the Articles of Peace,* 1649; *'Εικονοκλαστης* (anon.), 1649; *The Grand Case of Conscience. . . . stated* (anon.), 1650; *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio,* 1650; *The Life and Reign of King Charles* (anon.), 1651; *A Letter written to a Gentleman in the Country,* 1653; *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio Secunda,* 1654; *Prose Defensio contra Alexandrum Morum,* 1655; *Scriptum Domini Protectoris. . . . contra Hispanos,* 1655; *A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes,* 1659; *Considerations touching the likeliest means to remove Hirelings out of the Church,* 1659; *The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth* (anon.), 1659; *Brief Notes upon a late Sermon . . . by Mathew Griffith,* 1660; *Paradise Lost,* 1667; *Accidence commenc't Grammar* (anon.), 1669; *The History of Britain,* 1670; *Artis Logicæ Plenior Institutio,* 1670; *Paradise Regained . . . To which is added "Samson Agonistes,"* 1671; *Poems, etc., upon several Occasions,* 1673; *Of True Religion, etc.* (under initials: J. M.;), 1673; *Epistolarum Familiarum liber unus,* 1674. POSTHUMOUS: *Literæ Pseudo-Senatus Anglicani,* 1676; *Character of the Long Parliament* (possibly spurious), 1681; *A Brief History of Moscovia,* 1682; *De Doctrina Christiana libri duo posthumi,* 1825. He *translated:* Martin Bucer's *Judgment concerning Divorce,* 1644; *A Declaration or Letters Patent of the Election of this present King of Poland* (anon.), 1674; and edited: Raleigh's *Cabinet Council,* 1658.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 199

SEE: *Complete Poetical Works,* ed. William Vaughan Moody, Cambridge edition, rev. by Douglas Bush, 1965; Oxford Edition, ed. Helen Darbishire, Vol. I (*Paradise Lost*), 1952, Vol. II (*Paradise Regain'd, Samson Agonistes, and Minor Poems*), 1955; *Complete Poems and Major Prose,* ed. Merritt Y. Hughes, 1957-62, 3 v.; *Complete English Poetry* (*Excluding His Translation of Psalms 80-88*), ed. John T. Shawcross, 1963; *The Student's Milton,* ed. Frank A. Patterson, 1930; James Holly Hanford, *A Milton Handbook,* 1926, rev. 1946; *The Life Records of John Milton,* ed. J. Milton French, 1949-56, 4 v.; Kenneth Muir, *John Milton,* 1955; Frank Kermode, ed., *The Living Milton: Essays by Various Hands,* 1960; Calvin Huckaby, *John Milton: A Bibliographical Supplement,* 1960; Edward Le Comte, *A Milton Dictionary,* 1961; Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *John Milton; A Reader's Guide to His Poetry,* 1963; also see C. S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost,* 1942, repr. 1960; A. J. A. Waldock, *Paradise Lost and Its Critics,* 1949.

PERSONAL

I was born at London, of an honest family; my father was distinguished by the undeviating integrity of his life; my mother, by the esteem in which she was held, and the alms which she bestowed. My father destined me from a child to the pursuits of literature; and my appetite for knowledge was so voracious, that, from twelve years of age, I hardly ever left my studies, or

went to bed before midnight. This primarily led to my loss of sight. My eyes were naturally weak, and I was subject to frequent head-aches; which, however, could not chill the ardour of my curiosity, or retard the progress of my improvement. My father had me daily instructed in the grammar-school, and by other masters at home. He then, after I had acquired a proficiency in various languages, and had made a considerable progress in philosophy, sent me to the University of Cambridge. Here I passed seven years in the usual course of instruction and study, with the approbation of the good, and without any stain upon my character, till I took the degree of Master of Arts. After this I did not, as this miscreant feigns, run away into Italy, but of my own accord retired to my father's house, whither I was accompanied by the regrets of most of the fellows of the college, who shewed me no common marks of friendship and esteem. On my father's estate, where he had determined to pass the remainder of his days, I enjoyed an interval of uninterrupted leisure, which I entirely devoted to the perusal of the Greek and Latin classics; though I occasionally visited the metropolis, either for the sake of purchasing books, or of learning something new in mathematics or in music, in which I, at that time, found a source of pleasure and amusement. In this manner I spent five years till my mother's death. I then became anxious to visit foreign parts, and particularly Italy. My father gave me his permission, and I left home with one servant.

John Milton, 1654, *Second Defence of the People of England*

He married his first wife (Mary) Powell, of Fosthill, at Shotover, in Oxonshire. . . . Two opinions doe not well on the same boulster. She was a . . . royalist, and went to her mother to the king's quarters, neer Oxford. I have perhaps so much charity to her that she might not wrong his bed: but what man, especially contemplative, would like to have a young wife environ'd and storm'd by the sons of Mars, and those of the enemi partie? . . . He was a spare man. He was scarce so tall as I am—quaere, quot feet I am high: resp., of middle stature. He had abroun hayre. His complexion exceeding faire—he was so faire that they called him *the lady of Christ's College*. Ovall face. His eie a darke gray. He had a delicate tunable voice, and had good skill. His father instructed him. He had an organ in his howse: he played on that most. Of a very cheerfull humour.—He would be chearfull even in his gowte-fitts, and sing. He was very healthy and free from all diseases: seldome tooke any physique (only sometimes he tooke manna): only towards his latter end he was visited with the gowte, spring and fall. He had a very good memorie; but I beleeve that his excellent method of thinking and disposing did much to help his memorie.

John Aubrey, 1669-96, *Brief Lives*, ed. Clark, vol. II, pp. 64, 65, 67

He was frequenty visited in his house [in Petty France] by persons of quality, particularly my lady Ranelagh, whose son for some time he instructed; all learned foreigners of note, who could not pass out of the city without giving a visit to a person so eminent; and, lastly, by particular friends that had a high esteem for him—viz. Mr. Andrew Marvel; young Lawrence (the son of him that was president of Oliver's council), to whom there is a sonnet among the rest in his printed poems; Mr. Marchamont Needham, the writer of *Politicus;* but, above, all, Mr. Cyriack Skinner, whom he honoured with two sonnets. . . . Those [daughters] he had by his first [wife] he made serviceable to him in that very particular in which he most wanted their service, and supplied his want of eyesight by their eyes and tongue; for, though he had daily about him one or other to read to him —some, persons of man's estate, who of their own accord greedily catched at the opportunity of being his readers, that they might as well reap the benefit of what they read to him as oblige him by the benefit of their reading; others, of younger years, sent by their parents to the same end—yet, excusing only the eldest daughter by reason of her bodily infirmity and difficult utterance of speech (which, to say truth, I doubt, was the principal cause of excusing her), the other two were condemned to the performance of reading and exactly pronouncing of all the languages of whatever book he should at one time or other think fit to peruse—viz. the Hebrew (and, I think, the Syriac), the Greek, the Latin, the Italian, Spanish, and French. All which sorts of books to be confined to read without understanding one word must needs be a trial of patience almost beyond endurance; yet it was endured by both for a time. . . . There [in Jewin-street] he lived when he married his third wife, recommended to him by his old friend, Dr. Paget in Coleman Street.

Edward Phillips, 1694, *Memoir of Milton*, prefixed to the English Edition of Letters of State

In his youth he is said to have been extremely handsome, and while he was a student at Cambridge, he was called "the Lady of Christ's-College," and he took notice of this himself in one of his Public Prolusions before that university; *"A quibusdam audivi nuper domina."* The colour of his hair was a light brown; the symmetry of his features exact; enlivened with an agreeable air, and a beautiful mixture of fair and ruddy. . . . Mr. Wood observes, that "his eyes were none of the quickest." His stature, as we find it measured by himself, did not exceed the middle-size; he was neither too lean, nor too corpulent; his limbs well proportioned, nervous, and active, serviceable in all respects to his exercising the sword, in which he much delighted, and wanted neither skill, nor courage, to resent an affront from men of the most athletic constitutions. In his diet he was abstemious; not delicate in the choice of his dishes; and strong liquors of all kinds were his aversion. Being

too sadly convinced how much his health had suffered by night-studies in his younger years, he used to go early (seldom later than nine) to rest; and rose commonly in the summer at four, and in the winter at five in the morning; but when he was not disposed to rise at his usual hours, he always had one to read to him by his bed-side. At his first rising he had usually a chapter read to him out of the Hebrew bible; and he commonly studied all the morning till twelve, then used some exercise for an hour, afterwards dined, and after dinner played on the organ, and either sung himself, or made his wife sing, who, he said, had a good voice, but no ear, and then he went up to study again till six, when his friends came to visit him, and sat with him till eight. Then he went down to supper, which was usually olives and some light thing; and after supper he smoked his pipe, and drank a glass of water, and went to bed. When his blindness restrained him from other exercises, he had a machine to swing in for the preservation of his health; and diverted himself in his chamber with playing on an organ. He had a delicate ear and excellent voice, and great skill in vocal and instrumental music. His deportment was erect, open and affable; and his conversation easy, cheerful, and instructive.

Thomas Birch, 1738-53, *An Historical and Critical Account of the Life and Writings of Mr. John Milton,* vol. I, p. lxxiii

I am ashamed to relate what I fear is true, that Milton was one of the last students in either university that suffered the public indignity of corporal correction. . . . Milton has the reputation of having been in his youth eminently beautiful, so as to have been called the Lady of his college. His hair, which was of light brown, parted at the foretop, and hung down upon his shoulders, according to the picture which he has given of Adam. He was, however, not of the heroic stature, but rather below the middle size, according to Mr. Richardson, who mentions him as having narrowly escaped from being *short and thick*. He was vigorous and active, and delighted in the exercise of the sword, in which he is related to have been eminently skilful. . . . His eyes are said never to have been bright; but if he was a dexterous fencer, they must have been once quick. His domestick habits, so far as they are known, were those of a severe student. He drank little strong drink of any kind, and fed without excess in quantity, and in his earlier years without delicacy of choice. . . . Milton, who appears to have had a full conviction of the truth of Christianity, and to have regarded the Holy Scriptures with the profoundest veneration, to have been untainted by any heretical peculiarity of opinion, and to have lived in a confirmed belief of the immediate and occasional agency of Providence, yet grew old without any visible worship. In the distribution of his hours there was no hour of prayer, either solitary or with his household; omitting publick prayers, he omitted all.

Samuel Johnson, 1779, *John Milton, Lives of the English Poets*

His literature was immense. . . . With the Hebrew, and its two dialects, he was well acquainted; and of the Greek, Latin, Italian, French, and Spanish languages, he was a master. In Latin, Dr. Johnson observes, his skill was such as places him in the first rank of writers and criticks. In the Italian he was also particularly skilled. His "Sonnets" in that language have received the highest commendation from Italian criticks, both of his own and of modern times. If he had written generally in Italian, it has been supposed, by the late lord Orford, that he would have been the most perfect poet in modern language; for his own strength of thought would have condensed and hardened that speech to a proper degree. The Academy Della Crusca consulted him on the critical niceties of their language. In his early days indeed he had become deeply enamoured of "the two famous renowners of *Beatrice* and *Laura*." It has been rightly remarked, that he read almost all authors, and improved by all: He himself relates, that his "round of study and reading was ceaseless."

John Henry Todd, 1801-26, *Some Account of the Life and Writings of John Milton,* p. 346

We have offered no apology for expanding to such length our commentary on the character of John Milton; who, in old age, in solitude, in neglect, and blind, wrote *Paradise Lost;* a man whom labor or danger never deterred from whatever efforts a love of the supreme interests of man prompted. For are we not the better; are not all men fortified by the remembrance of the bravery, the purity, the temperance, the toil, the independence and the angelic devotion of this man, who, in a revolutionary age, taking counsel only of himself, endeavored, in his writings and in his life, to carry out the life of man to new heights of spiritual grace and dignity, without any abatement of its strength?

Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1838, *Milton*

With respect to the worldly circumstances of this great man, little is known with certainty. It is evident that during his travels, and after his return, the allowance made him by his father was liberal. It was adequate, we may see, to the support of himself and his two nephews, for it is not likely that his sister paid him anything for them. He must also have considered himself able to support a family, without keeping school, when he married Miss Powell. He of course inherited the bulk of his father's property, but of the amount of it we are ignorant; all we know is that it included the interest in his house in Bread-street. His losses were not inconsiderable. A sum of £2000, which he had invested in the Excise Office, was lost at the Restoration, as the Government refused to recognize the obligations of the Commonwealth; according to the account of his granddaughter, he lost another

sum of £2000, by placing it in the hands of a money-scrivener; and he also lost at the Restoration a property of £60 a year out of the lands of the Dean and Chapter of Westminister, which he very probably had purchased. His house in Bread-street was destroyed by the Great Fire. The whole property which he left behind him, exclusive of his claim on the Powell family for his wife's fortune, and of his household goods, did not exceed £1500, including the produce of his library, a great part of which he is said to have disposed of before his death.

Thomas Keightley, 1855, *An Account of the Life, Opinions and Writings of John Milton,* p. 75

I do not find that Milton, though he wrote against paid ministers as hirelings, ever expressly formulated an opinion against ministers as such. But as has already been hinted, there grew up in him, in the last period of his life, a secret sympathy with the mode of thinking which came to characterise the Quaker sect. Not that Milton adopted any of their peculiar fancies. He affirms categorically the permissibility of oaths, of military service, and requires that women should keep silence in the congregation. But in negativing all means of arriving at truth except the letter of Scripture interpreted by the inner light, he stood upon the same platform as the followers of George Fox.

Mark Pattison, 1879, *Milton* (English Men of Letters), p. 148

On the whole, Milton's character was not an amiable one, nor even wholly estimable. It is probable that he never in the course of his whole life did anything that he considered wrong; but unfortunately, examples are not far to seek of the facility with which desire can be made to confound itself with deliberate approval. That he was an exacting, if not a tyrannical husband and father, that he held in the most peremptory and exaggerated fashion the doctrine of the superiority of man to woman, that his egotism in a man who had actually accomplished less would be held ludicrous and half disgusting, that his faculty of appreciation beyond his own immediate tastes and interests was small, that his intolerance surpassed that of an inquisitor, and that his controversial habits and manners outdid the license even of that period of controversial abuse,—these are propositions which I cannot conceive to be disputed by any competent critic aware of the facts. If they have ever been denied, it is merely from the amiable but uncritical point of view which blinks all a man's personal defects in consideration of his literary genius. That we cannot afford to do here, especially as Milton's personal defects had no small influence on his literary character.

George Saintsbury, 1887, *History of Elizabethan Literature,* p. 317

There is something very fascinating in the records we have of Milton's one visit to the Continent. A more impressive Englishman never left our shores. Sir Philip Sidney perhaps approaches him nearest. Beautiful beyond praise, and just sufficiently conscious of it to be careful never to appear at a disadvantage, dignified in manners, versed in foreign tongues, yet full of the ancient learning,—a gentleman, a scholar, a poet, a musician, and a Christian,—he moved about in a leisurely manner from city to city, writing Latin verses for his hosts and Italian sonnets in their ladies' albums, buying books and music, and creating, one cannot doubt, an all too flattering impression of an English Protestant.

Augustine Birrell, 1887, *Obiter Dicta, Second Series,* p. 14

In Milton's life, as in Milton's prose writings, occur passages which are not admirable, which are indeed the reverse of admirable. The student of literature, we may presume, is a lover of beauty, and the temptation with him to shirk the ugly passages of a life is a temptation easily understood. Here he may say, as Mr. Matthew Arnold has said of Shelley, here, in *Comus* and *Samson,* here in the Council Chamber sheltering Davenant from dangers incurred through his Royalist ardors, here, in company with Lawrence, listening to the lute well touched, is the Milton we desire to know, the Milton who delights. Let us, at least as long as we are able, avert our eyes from the Milton who disgusts, from the unamiable Milton, the Milton who calls his opponent "an idiot by breeding and a solicitor by presumption," the Milton who helped to embitter his daughters' lives, and remembered them as "unkind children" in his will. What is gained by forcing this disgusting Milton on our attention? We choose, if we can, to retain a charming picture of the great poet. The delightful Milton is the true Milton after all. Ah, give us back the delightful Milton!

Edward Dowden, 1895, *New Studies in Literature,* p. 442

It was fortunate for the harmonious development of Milton's genius that during the critical years between youth and manhood, years which in most men's lives are fullest of turmoil and dubiety, he was enabled to live a life of quiet contemplation. His nature was fiercely polemical, and without this period of calm set between his college life and his life as a public disputant, the sweeter saps of his mind would never have come to flower and fruitage. It was particularly fortunate, too, that this interim should be passed in the country, where the lyric influences were softest, where all that was pastoral and genial in his imagination was provoked. The special danger of men of his stamp, in whom will and doctrine are constantly president over impulse, is the loss of plasticity, the stiffening of imagination in its bonds.

William Vaughn Moody, 1899, ed., *Poetical Works of Milton, Life,* Cambridge ed., p. xiii

Comus (1634-37)

My Lord: This poem, which received its first occasion of birth from your self and others of your noble family, and much honour from your own person in the performance, now returns again to make a finall dedication of itself to you. Although not openly acknowledged by the author, yet it is a legitimate offspring, so lovely, and so much desired, that the often copying of it hath tired my pen to give my severall friends satisfaction, and brought me to a necessity of producing it to the publike view, and now to offer it up in all rightful devotion to those fair hopes and rare endowments of your much-promising youth, which gave a full assurance, to all that knew you, of a future excellence.

Henry Lawes, 1637, *To Lord-Viscount Bracly,* First ed.

Since your going, you have charged me with new obligations, both for a very kinde letter from you, dated the sixth of this month, and for a charity piece of entertainment which came therewith,—wherein I should much commend the tragical part if the lyrical did not ravish me with a certain Dorique delicacy in your songs and odes; whereunto I must plainly confess to have seen nothing parallel in our language.

Sir Henry Wotton, 1638, *Letter to John Milton,* April 13

On the whole, whether *Comus* be or be not deficient as a drama, whether it is considered as an epic drama, a series of lines, a mask, or a poem, I am of opinion that Milton is here only inferior to his own *Paradise Lost.*

Thomas Warton, 1785, ed., *Milton's Poems on Several Occasions,* p. 263

A work more truly poetical is rarely found; allusions, images, and descriptive epithets, embellish almost every period with lavish decoration. As a series of lines, therefore, it may be considered as worthy of all the admiration with which the votaries have received it.

Samuel Johnson, 1779, *John Milton, Lives of the English Poets*

Can there be a test of merit more indisputable than this?—for *Comus,* though by no means faultless as a Masque, has to boast of a poetry more rich and imaginative than is to be found in any other composition save *The Tempest* of Shakspeare.

Nathan Drake, 1817, *Shakspeare and his Times,* vol. II, p. 579

A young girl and her brothers are benighted and separated as they pass through a forest in Herefordshire. How meagre is this solitary fact! how

barren a paragraph would it have made for the Herefordshire journal,—had such a journal been then in existence! Submit it to Milton, and beautiful is the form which it assumes. Then rings that wood with the jocund revelry of Comus and his company; and the maiden draws near, in the strength of unblemished chastity, and her courage waxes strong as she sees

"A sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night"—

and she calls upon Echo to tell her of the flowery cave which hides her brothers, and Echo betrays her to the enchanter. Then comes the spirit from the "starry threshold of Jove's court," and in shepherd-weeds leads on the brothers to her rescue; and the necromancer is put to flight, but not till he has bound up the lady in fetters of stone; and Sabrina hastens from under her "translucent wave" to dissolve the spell—and again they all three bend their happy steps back to the roof of their fathers. This is not extravagant rhapsody—the tale is still acually preserved; but it is preserved like a fly in amber. The image is a mere thing of wood, but Milton enshrines it, and it becomes an object of worship.

Robert Southey, 1827, "Todd's Edition of Milton," *Quarterly Review,* vol. 36, p. 45

One of the last and loveliest radiations of the dramatic spirit, which seemed almost to live its life out in about half a century of English literature, beginning in the times of Queen Elizabeth, and ending in those of Charles the First. . . . Of *Comus,* I think, it might be said, as truly as of any poem in the language, that it is admirably adapted to inspire a real feeling for poetry. It abounds with so much of true imagination, such attractiveness of fancy, such grace of language and of metre, and withal contains so much thought and wisdom wherewith to win a mind unused to the poetic processes, that were I asked what poem might best be chosen to awaken the imagination to a healthful activity, I would point to Milton's *Comus,* as better fitted than almost any other for the purpose.

Henry Reed, 1855, *Lectures on English Literature, from Chaucer to Tennyson,* pp. 189, 190

With these sounds left on the ear, and a final glow of angelic light on the eye, the performance ends, and the audience rises and disperses through the castle. The castle is now a crumbling ruin, along the ivy-clad walls and through the dark passages of which the visitor clambers or gropes his way, disturbing the crows and the martlets in their recesses; but one can stand yet in the doorway through which the parting guests of that night descended into the inner court; and one can see where the stage was, on which the sister was lost by her brothers, and Comus revelled with his crew, and the lady was fixed as marble by enchantment, and Sabrina arose with her water-

nymphs, and the swains danced in welcome of the earl, and the Spirit gloriously ascended to its native heaven. More mystic it is to leave the ruins, and, descending one of the winding streets that lead from the castle into the valleys of the Teme, to look upwards to castle and town seen as one picture, and, marking more expressly the three long pointed windows that gracefully slit the chief face of the wall towards the north, to realize that it was from that ruin, and from those windows in the ruin, that the verse of *Comus* was first shook into the air of England. Much as Milton wrote afterwards, he never wrote anything more beautiful, more perfect than *Comus*.

David Masson, 1858, *The Life of John Milton,* vol. I, ch. vii

The tale is told beautifully, simply; without plot or any artifice; and with no regard to superficial probabilities. Frankly discarding everything of the drama, except its form, the poet does not stoop, as, within certain limits, the successful dramatist must, to be a literary mocking-bird. Aloft on his perch, like a nightingale, he fills the grove with his music, varying his note as the subject varies, but always with the same volume of sound and the same rich and mellow tone. None of the masters of English poetry, Milton's predecessors, not Chaucer, not Spenser, not Shakespeare even, had done much to detract from the originality, or to herald the perfection of Comus. Chaucer's blank verse is not to be mentioned with that of Milton.

Peter Bayne, 1878, *The Chief Actors in the Puritan Revolution,* p. 309

It is moreover raised above an ethical poem by its imaginative form and power; and its literary worth enables us to consider it, if we choose, apart from its dramatic form. Its imagination, however, sinks at times, and one can scarcely explain this otherwise than by saying that the Elizabethan habit of fantastic metaphor clung to Milton at this time. When he does fall, the fall is made more remarkable by the soaring strength of his loftier flight and by the majesty of the verse. Nothing can be worse in conception than the comparison of night to a thief who shuts up, for the sake of his felony, the stars whose lamps burn everlasting oil in his dark lantern. The better it is carried out and the finer the verse, the worse it is. And yet it is instantly followed by the great passage about the fears of night, the fantasies and airy tongues that syllable men's names, and by the glorious appeal to conscience, faith, and God, followed in its turn by the fantastic conceit of the cloud that turns out its silver lining on the night. This is the Elizabethan weakness and strength, the mixture of gold and clay, the want of that art-sensitiveness which feels the absurd: and Milton, even in *Paradise Lost,* when he had got further from his originals, falls into it not unfrequently. It is a fault

which runs through a good deal of his earlier work, it is more seen in *Comus* than elsewhere; but it was the fault of that poetic age.

Stopford Brooke, 1879, *Milton (Classical Writers)*, p. 24

Lycidas (1638)

One of the poems on which much praise has been bestowed, is *Lycidas;* of which the diction is harsh, the rhymes uncertain, and the numbers unpleasing. What beauty there is we must, therefore, seek in the sentiments and images. It is not to be considered as the effusion of real passion; for passion runs not after remote allusions and obscure opinions. . . . In this poem there is no nature, for there is nothing new. Its form is that of a pastoral,—easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting: whatever images it can supply are long ago exhausted, and its inherent improbability always forces dissatisfaction on the mind. . . . This poem has yet a grosser fault. With these trifling fictions are mingled the most awful and sacred truths, such as ought never to be polluted with such irreverend combinations. The shepherd, likewise, is now a feeder of sheep, and afterwards an ecclesiastical pastor, a superintendent of a Christian flock. Such equivocations are always unskilful: but here they are indecent, and at least approach to impiety,—of which, however, I believe the writer not to have been conscious. Such is the power of reputation justly acquired, that its blaze drives away the eye from nice examination. Surely no man could have fancied that he read *Lycidas* with pleasure had he not known its author.

Samuel Johnson, 1779, *John Milton, Lives of the English Poets*

In *Lycidas* there is perhaps more poetry than sorrow. But let us read it for its poetry. It is true that passion plucks no berries from the myrtle and ivy, nor calls upon Arethus and Mincius, nor tells of rough satyrs with cloven heel. But poetry does this; and in the hands of Milton does it with a peculiar and irresistible charm.

Thomas Warton, 1785, ed., *Milton's Poems on Several Occasions*, p. 36

Of all Milton's smaller poems, *Lycidas* is the greatest favourite with me. I cannot agree to the charge which Dr. Johnson has brought against it of pedantry and want of feeling. It is the first emanation of classical sentiment in a youthful scholar,—"most musical, most melancholy!" A certain tender gloom overspreads it, a wayward abstraction, a forgetfulness of his subject in the serious reflections that arise out of it. The gusts of passion come and go like the sounds of music borne on the wind. The loss of the friend whose death he laments seems to have recalled, with double force, the reality of

those speculations which they had indulged together; we are transported to classic ground, and a mysterious strain steals responsive on the ear while we listen to the poet

"with eager thought warbling his Doric lay."

William Hazlitt, 1818, *Lectures on the English Poets,* Appendix

The common *metre* of six accents, which spread so widely during the sixteenth century, seldom tolerated a verse with a compound section. The reluctance to admit these verses was strengthened by the example of Drayton, who rigidly excluded them from *Polyolbion.* There are, however, a few poems, in which they are admitted freely enough to give a peculiar character to the rhythm. One of these poems is the *Elegy* written by Brysket, (though generally ascribed to Spenser), on the death of Sir Philip Sidney. It has very little poetical merit, but deserves attention, as having undoubtedly been in Milton's eye, when he wrote his *Lycidas.* From it Milton borrowed his irregular rhimes, and that strange mixture of Christianity and Heathenism, which shocked the feelings and roused the indignation of Johnson. It may be questioned, if the peculiarity in the meter can fairly be considered as a blemish. Like endings, recurring at uncertain distances, impart a wildness and an appearance of negligence to the verse, which suits well with the character of elegy. But to bring in St. Peter hand in hand with a pagan deity is merely ludicrous; it was the taste of the age, and that is all that can be urged in its excuse. Still, however, the beauties of this singular poem may well make us tolerant of even greater absurdity. No work of Milton has excited warmer admiration, or called forth more strongly the zeal of the partizan.

Edwin Guest, 1838, *A History of English Rhythms,* vol. I, p. 274

Lycidas appeals not only to the imagination, but to the educated imagination. There is no ebb and flow of poetical power as in *Comus;* it is an advance on all his previous work, and it fitly closes the poetic labour of his youth. It is needless to analyse it, and all criticism is weaker than the poem itself. Yet we may say that one of its strange charms is its solemn undertone rising like a religious chaunt through the elegiac musick; the sense of a stern national crisis in the midst of its pastoral mourning; the sense of Milton's grave force of character among the flowers and fancies of the poem; the sense of the Christian religion pervading the classical imagery. We might say that these things are ill-fitted to each other. So they would be, were not the art so fine and the poetry so over-mastering; were they not fused together by genius into a whole so that the unfitness itself becomes fascination.

Stopford Brooke, 1879, *Milton (Classical Writers),* p. 26

Mr. Arnold, like everyone else who speaks with authority on such matters, is horrified when Dr. Johnson bluntly condemns *Lycidas*. Now I could read over the *Allegro* and *Penseroso* a thousand times without tiring of them. *Comus, Paradise Regained,* the other secondary poems, all of them, give me great pleasure, though in different degrees; but as for *Lycidas,* well, I say ditto to old Sam. In the first place the kind of idyll is not to my taste. If a poet really sorrows over the death of a friend to that degree that he cannot, as a relief to the soul, refrain from pouring out his sorrow in song, I think his utterance should be natural and straightforward; he should not speak in a falsetto tone, or overlay his theme with classical affectations. On the other hand, if the grief is only a half grief, conjured up by the imagination to play with like a toy, then, in my opinion, the bard had better hold his tongue. In the second place, the jumbling together of Christian and heathen traditions jars upon me just as it jarred upon the tough old dictionary-maker. Nay, besides all this, *Lycidas* appears to me not so much a spontaneous outburst as a self-appointed task. One of Milton's editors tells us that Mr. King's friends—Milton being one of those friends—agreed to write, and bind up together, a lot of verses on his death, but that when *Lycidas* made its appearance, it proved so much more important than all the other poems put together, that it was withdrawn from the book, to be afterwards separately published; and even now, I think, traces of the original business-like arrangement are to be found in the elegy as we have it.

Sir Francis Hastings Doyle, 1887, *Reminiscences and Opinions,* p. 184

There are indeed blotches in it. The speech of Peter, magnificently as it is introduced, and strangely as it has captivated some critics, who seem to think that anything attacking the Church of England must be poetry, is out of place, and in itself is obscure, pedantic, and grotesque. There is some over-classicism, and the scale of the piece does not admit the display of quite such sustained and varied power as in *Comus*. But what there is, is so exquisite that hardly can we find fault with Mr. Pattison's hyperbole when he called *Lycidas* the "high-water-mark of English poetry." High-water mark even in the physical world is a variable limit. Shakespere constantly, and some other poets here and there in short passages go beyond Milton. But in the same space we shall nowhere find anything that can outgo the passage beginning "Alas what boots it," down to "head of thine," and the whole conclusion from "Return Alpheus." For melody of versification, for richness of images, for curious felicity of expression, these cannot be surpassed.

George Saintsbury, 1887, *History of Elizabethan Literature,* p. 322

Lycidas has a beauty and passion unknown to its Alexandrian predecessors, and it has not a touch of their oriental effeminacy and licentiousness. . . . The rhythm is varied, and flows now in leaping waves, now in long rolling billows that carry all before them, like the surging periods of *Paradise Lost*. There is probably no short poem in the language the rhythm of which has been more deservedly praised and studied, or more despaired of by other poets. Milton's mastery of rhythm, remarkable from the first, almost culminated in *Lycidas,* in spite of the fact that he was there subjected (practically for the last time) to what he afterward called "the troublesome and modern boundage of riming."

William P. Trent, 1899, *John Milton, A Short Study of His Life and Works,* p. 140

Paradise Lost (1667)

Mr. Sam. Symons entered for his copie, under the hands of Mr. Thomas Tomkyns and Mr. Warden Royston, a Booke or Copie Intituled Paradise Lost, a Poem in Tenne bookes, by J. M. 6*d.*

Entry at Stationers' Hall, 1667, *August 20*

Thou has not miss'd one thought that could be fit,
And all that was improper dost omit;
So that no room is here for writers left,
But to detect their ignorance or theft.
That majesty which thro' thy work doth reign
Draws the devout, deterring the profane.
And things divine thou treat'st of in such state
As them preserves, and thee, inviolate.
At once delight and horror on us seize,
Thou sing'st with so much gravity and ease;
And above human flight dost soar aloft,
With plume so strong, so equal, and so soft:
The bird named from that paradise you sing
So never flags, but always keeps on wing.
Where could'st thou words of such a compass find?
Whence furnish such a vast expense of mind?
Just heaven thee, like Tiresias, to requite,
Rewards with prophecy thy loss of sight.

Andrew Marvell, 1674, *On Milton's Paradise Lost*

That *Paradise Lost* of Milton, which some are pleased to call a poem.

Thomas Rymer, 1678-92, *On the Tragedies of the Last Age*

As for Mr. Milton, whom we all admire with so much justice, his subject is not that of an heroic poem, properly so called. His design is the losing of our happiness; his event is not prosperous, like that of all other epic works; his heavenly machines are many, and his human persons are but two. But I will not take Mr. Rymer's work out of his hands: he has promised the world a critique on that author; wherein though he will not allow his poem for heroic, I hope he will grant us, that his thoughts are elevated, his words sounding, and that no man has so happily copied the manner of Homer, or so copiously translated his Grecisms, and the Latin elegances of Virgil. It is true, he runs into a flat of thought, sometimes for a hundred lines together, but it is when he is got into a track of Scripture. His antiquated words were his choice, not his necessity; for therein he imitated Spenser, as Spenser did Chaucer. . . . Neither will I justify Milton for his blank verse, though I may excuse him, by the example of Hannibal Caro, and other Italians, who have used it; for whatever causes he alleges for the abolishing of rhyme, (which I have not now the leisure to examine), his own particular reason is plainly this, that rhyme was not his talent; he had neither the ease of doing it, nor the graces of it; which is manifest in his *Juvenilia,* or verses written in his youth, where his rhyme is always constrained and forced, and comes hardly from him, at an age when the soul is most pliant, and the passion of love makes almost every man a rhymer, though not a poet.

John Dryden, 1692, *Essay on Satire, Works,* ed. Scott and Saintsbury, vol. XIII, pp. 18, 20

As the first place among our English poets is due to Milton, and as I have drawn more quotations out of him than from any other, I shall enter into a regular criticism upon his *Paradise Lost,* which I shall publish every Saturday till I have given my thoughts upon that poem. . . . I must likewise take notice, that there are in Milton several words of his own coining, as *Cerberean, miscreated, hell-doom'd, embryon* atoms, and many others. If the reader is offended at this liberty in our English poet, I would recommend him to a discourse in Plutarch, which shows us how frequently Homer has made use of the same liberty. Milton, by the above-mentioned helps, and by the choice of the noblest words and phrases which our tongue would afford him, has carried our language to a greater height than any of the English poets have ever done before or after him, and made the sublimity of his style equal to that of his sentiments. . . . This redundancy of those several ways of speech, which Aristotle calls "foreign language," and with which Milton has so very much enriched, and in some places darkened, the language of his poem, was the more proper for his use because his poem is written in blank verse.

Joseph Addison, 1711-12, *The Spectator,* Nos. 262, 285

It must be acknowledged that till about forty years ago Great Britain was barren of critical learning, though fertile in excellent writers; and in particular had so little taste for epic poetry, and was so unacquainted with the essential properties and peculiar beauties of it, that *Paradise Lost,* an admirable work of that kind, published by Mr. Milton, the great ornament of his age and country, lay many years unspoken of and entirely disregarded, till at length it happened that some persons of great delicacy and judgment found out the merit of that excellent poem, and, by communicating their sentiments to their friends, propagated the esteem of the author, who soon acquired universal applause.

Sir Richard Blackmore, 1716, *Essays*

Paradise Lost had been printed forty years before it was known to the greatest part of England that there barely was such a book.

John Dennis, 1721, *Letters*

When Milton first published his famous poem, the first edition was long of going off; few either read, liked, or understood it; and it gained ground merely by its merit.

Jonathan Swift, 1732, *Letter to Sir Charles Wogan*

Milton's style, in his *Paradise Lost,* is not natural; 'tis an exotic style.—As his subject lies a good deal out of our world, it has a particular propriety in those parts of the poem: and, when he is on earth, wherever he is describing our parents in Paradise, you see he uses a more easy and natural way of writing.—Though his formal style may fit the higher parts of his own poem, it does very ill for others who write on natural and pastoral subjects.

Alexander Pope, 1734-36, *Spence's Anecdotes,* ed. Singer, p. 131

The boldness, freedom, and variety of our blank verse is infinitely more favourable than rhyme; to all kinds of sublime poetry. The fullest proof of this is afforded by Milton; an author whose genius led him eminently to the sublime. The whole first and second books of *Paradise Lost,* are continued instances of it.

Hugh Blair, 1783, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres,* ed. Mills, Lecture iv, p. 44

Is not Milton a sublimer poet than Homer or Virgil? Are not his personages more sublimely clothed, and do you not know that there is not perhaps *one page* in Milton's *Paradise Lost* in which he has not borrowed his imagery from the *Scriptures?* I allow and rejoice that *Christ* appealed only to the understanding and the affections; but I affirm that after reading Isaiah,

or St. Paul's *Epistle to the Hebrews,* Homer and Virgil are disgustingly *tame* to me, and Milton himself barely tolerable.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1796, *Letters,* ed. E. H. Coleridge, vol. I, p. 199

Nothing can be farther from my intention than to insinuate that Milton was a plagiarist, or servile imitator; but I conceive, that, having read these sacred poems of very high merit, at the immediate age when his own mind was just beginning to teem with poetry, he retained numberless thoughts, passages, and expressions therein, so deeply in his mind, that they hung inherently on his imagination, and became, as it were, naturalized there.

Charles Dunster, 1800, *Considerations on Milton's Early Reading,* p. 11

The merits of his epic do not, accordingly, consist in regularity of plan so much as in scattered passages of independent beauty, and in the perfection of his poetic diction. The universal admiration of Milton in the eighteenth century is based on his isolated descriptions of paradisiac innocence and beauty, his awful picture of Hell, with the character of its inhabitants, whom he sketched, after the antique, as giants of the Abyss. It is questionable if any real benefit accrued to the language of English poetry from its increased leaning to the Latinism of Milton rather than to the Germanism of Spenser: but this tendency being a fact, Milton must be regarded as the greatest master of style, and in many respects the standard of dignified poetic expression.

Frederick Schlegel, 1815, *Lectures on the History of Literature,* XII

The Genius of Milton, more particularly in respect to its span in immensity, calculated him, by a sort of birth-right, for such an "argument" as *Paradise Lost:* he had an exquisite passion for what is properly, in the sense of ease and pleasure, poetical Luxury; and with that, it appears to me, he would fain have been content, if he could, so doing, have preserved his self-respect and feel[ing] of duty performed; but there was working in him, as it were, that same sort of thing as operates in the great world to the end of a Prophecy's being accomplish'd: therefore he devoted himself rather to the ardours than the pleasures of song, solacing himself at intervals with cups of old wine; and those are, with some exceptions the finest parts of the poem.

John Keats, 1818, *Notes on Milton's Paradise Lost, Works,* ed. Forman, vol. III, p. 19

In *Paradise Lost*—indeed in everyone of his poems—it is Milton himself whom you see; his Satan, his Adam, his Raphael, almost his Eve—are all John Milton; and it is a sense of this intense egotism that gives me the greatest pleasure in reading Milton's works. The egotism of such a man is a revelation of spirit.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1833, *Table Talk,* Aug. 18

The slowness of Milton's advance to glory is now generally owned to have been much exaggerated: we might say that the reverse was nearer the truth. . . . It would hardly, however, be said, even in this age, of a poem 3,000 copies of which had been sold in eleven years, that its success had been small; and some, perhaps, might doubt whether *Paradise Lost,* published eleven years since, would have met with a greater demand. There is sometimes a want of congeniality in public taste which no power of genius will overcome. For Milton it must be said by every one conversant with the literature of the age that preceded Addison's famous criticism, from which some have dated the reputation of *Paradise Lost,* that he took his place among great poets from the beginning.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Literature of Europe,*
pt. iv, ch. v, par. 34

Adam and Eve are beautiful, graceful objects, but no one has breathed the Pygmalion life into them; they remain cold statues. Milton's sympathies were with things rather than with men, the scenery and phenomena of nature, the trim gardens, the burning lake; but as for the phenomena of the mind, he was not able to see them. He has no delineations of mind except Satan, of which we may say that Satan was his own character, the black side of it. I wish, however, to be understood not to speak at all in disparagement of Milton; far from that.

Thomas Carlyle, 1838, *Lectures on the*
History of Literature, p. 166

In *Paradise Lost* we feel as if we were admitted to the outer courts of the Infinite. In that all-glorious temple of genius inspired by truth, we catch the full diapason of the heavenly organ. With its first choral swell the soul is lifted from the earth. In the *Divina Commedia* the man, the Florentine, the exiled Ghibelline, stands out, from first to last, breathing defiance and revenge. Milton, in some of his prose works, betrays the partisan also; but in his poetry we see him in the white robes of the minstrel, with upturned though sightless eyes, rapt in meditation at the feet of the heavenly muse. Dante, in his dark vision, descends to the depths of the world of perdition, and, homeless fugitive as he is, drags his proud and prosperous enemies

down with him, and buries them, doubly destroyed, in the flaming sepulchres of the lowest hell. Milton, on the other hand, seems almost to have purged off the dross of humanity. Blind, poor, friendless, in solitude and sorrow, with quite as much reason as his Italian rival to repine at his fortune and war against mankind, how calm and unimpassioned is he in all that concerns his own personality! He deemed too highly of his divine gift, to make it the instrument of immortalizing his hatreds. One cry, alone, of sorrow at his blindness, one pathetic lamentation over the evil days on which he had fallen, bursts from his full heart. There is not a flash of human wrath in all his pictures of woe. Hating nothing but evil spirits, in the childlike simplicity of his heart, his pure hands undefiled with the pitch of the political intrigues in which he had lived, he breathes forth his inexpressibly majestic strains,—the poetry not so much of earth as of heaven.

Edward Everett, 1853, *Orations and Speeches,* vol. II, p. 222

How noble this metre is in Milton's hands, how completely it shows itself capable of the grand, nay of the grandest, style, I need not say. To this metre, as used in *Paradise Lost,* our country owes the glory of having produced one of the only two poetical works in the grand style which are to be found in the modern languages; the *Divine Comedy* of Dante is the other. England and Italy here stand alone; Spain, France and Germany have produced great poets, but neither Calderon, nor Corneille, nor Schiller, nor even Goethe, has produced a body of poetry in the true grand style, in the sense in which the style of the body of Homer's poetry, or Pindar's, or Sophocles's, is grand. But Dante has, and so has Milton; and in this respect Milton possesses a distinction which even Shakespeare, undoubtedly the supreme poetical power in our literature, does not share with him. Not a tragedy of Shakespeare but contains passages in the worst of all styles, the affected style; and the grand style, although it may be harsh, or obscure, or cumbrous, or over-laboured, is never affected. In spite, therefore, of objections which may justly be urged against the plan and treatment of *Paradise Lost,* in spite of its possessing, certainly, a far less enthralling force of interest to attract and to carry forward the reader than the *Iliad* or the *Divine Comedy,* it fully deserves, it can never lose, its immense reputation; for, like the *Iliad* and the *Divine Comedy,* nay in some respects to a higher degree than either of them, it is in the grand style.

Matthew Arnold, 1861, *Lectures on Translating Homer*

I don't think I've read him these forty years; the whole Scheme of the Poem, and certain Parts of it, looming as grand as anything in my Memory; but I never could read ten lines together without stumbling at some Pedantry

that tipped me at once out of Paradise, or even Hell, into the Schoolroom, worse than either.

Edward Fitzgerald, 1876, *Letters,* vol. I, p. 380

The description of the garden of Eden, in the fourth book of *Paradise Lost,* is magnificent, but vague. The pomp of language and profusion of images leaves on the imagination no definite picture. You have, it is true, "in narrow room Nature's whole wealth," but it does not satisfy, as many a humbler but real scene described with a few strokes satisfies. Such landscapes in poetry, entirely projected by the imagination and answering to no scene on earth, are, like the composition pictures, which some painters delight in, only splendid failures.

John Campbell Shairp, 1877, *On Poetic Interpretation of Nature,* p. 191

The Style is always great. On the whole it is the greatest in the whole range of English poetry, so great that when once we have come to know and honour and love it, it so subdues the judgment that the judgment can with difficulty do its work with temperance. It lifts the low, gives life to the commonplace, dignifies even the vulgar, and makes us endure that which is heavy and dull. We catch ourselves admiring things not altogether worthy of admiration, because the robe they wear is so royal. No style, when one has lived in it, is so spacious and so majestic a place to walk in. . . . Fulness of sound, weight of march, compactness of finish, fitness of words to things, fitness of pauses to thought, a strong grasp of the main idea while other ideas play round it, power of digression without loss of the power to return, equality of power over vast spaces of imagination, sustained splendour when he soars

"With plume so strong, so equal and so soft,"

a majesty in the conduct of thought, and a music in the majesty which fills it with solemn beauty, belong one and all to the style; and it gains its highest influence on us, and fulfils the ultimate need of a grand style in being the easy and necessary expression of the very character and nature of the man. It reveals Milton, as much, sometimes even more than his thought.

Stopford Brooke, 1879, *Milton, (Classical Writers),* p. 83

Who now reads the ancient writers? Who systematically reads the great writers, be they ancient or modern, whom the consent of ages has marked out as classics: typical, immortal, peculiar teachers of our race? Alas! *Paradise Lost* is lost again to us beneath an inundation of graceful academic verse, sugary stanzas of ladylike prettiness, and ceaseless explanations in more or less readable prose of what John Milton meant or did not mean, or

what he saw or did not see, who married his great aunt, and why Adam or Satan is like that, or unlike the other. We read a perfect library about *Paradise Lost,* but *Paradise Lost* itself we do not read.

Frederic Harrison, 1879, *The Choice of Books and Other Literary Pieces,* p. 13

The dust of the conflict had fallen; and the mountain heights shone out once more from the serene distance: once more he confronted the mighty works of ancient genius. They pleased him still, from their severity and their simplicity; but they did not satisfy him—because they wanted elevation. In his *Paradise Lost* he raised and endeavoured to spiritualise the antique epic. There are many who will always regard St. Peter's temple in the air as the first of architectural monuments. The admirers of the classic will, however, feel that the amplitude and height of the wondrous dome are no sufficient substitute for that massive simplicity and breadth of effect which belong to the Parthenon; while those who revere our cathedrals will maintain that it lacks the variety, the mystery, the aspiration, and the infinitude which characterise the Christian architecture of the North. On analogous grounds the more devoted admirers of Homer and of Shakespeare will ever be dissatisfied with Milton's work, however they may venerate his genius. It is obviously composite in its character—the necessary result of its uniting a Hebraic spirit with a classic form. Dante, like Milton, uses the Greek mythology freely; considering it, no doubt, as part of that "inheritance of the Heathen," into possession of which Christendom had a right to enter; but he uses it as a subordinate ornament, and in matters of mere detail. His poem is a Vision, not an Epic, that vision of supernatural truth, of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, which passed before the eyes of the mediæval Church as she looked up in nocturnal vigil; not the mundane circle of life and experience, of action and of passion, exhibited in its completeness, and contemplated with calm satisfaction by a Muse that looks down from heaven.

Aubrey De Vere, 1887, *Essays, Chiefly on Poetry,* vol. II, p. 112

I have said that the grandest of English supernatural creations is Milton's Satan. No other personage has at once such magnitude and definiteness of outline as that sublime, defiant archangel, whether in action or in repose. Milton, like Dante, has to do with the unknown world. The Florentine bard soars at last within the effulgence of "the eternal, coeternal beam." Milton's imagination broods "in the wide womb of uncreated night." We enter that "palpable obscure," where there is "no light, but rather darkness visible," and where lurk many a "grisly terror" and "execrable shape."

Edmund Clarence Stedman, 1892, *The Nature and Elements of Poetry,* p. 245

Milton's description of hell and its inhabitants is as detailed and conscientious as that of a land-surveyor or a natural philosopher.

Max Nordau, 1895, *Degeneration,* p. 78

Paradise Regained (1671)

After I had, with the best attention, read it [*Paradise Lost*] through, I made him another visit, and returned him his book, with due acknowledgement of the favour he had done me in communicating it to me. He asked how I liked it, and what I thought of it; which I modestly, but freely, told him: and, after some further discourse about it, I pleasantly said to him, "Thou hast said much here of Paradise *Lost;* but what hast thou to say of Paradise *Found?*" He made me no answer, but sate some time in a muse, then brake off that discourse and fell upon another subject. After the sickness was over, and the city well cleansed and become safely habitable again, he returned thither. And when, afterwards, I went to wait on him there (which I seldom failed of doing, whenever my occasions drew me to London), he showed me his second poem, called *Paradise Regained,* and in a pleasant tone said to me, "This is owing to you; for you put it into my head by the question you put to me at Chalfont, which before I had not thought of."

Thomas Ellwood, 1714, *The History of the Life of,* Written by his own Hand

Had this poem been written not by Milton, but by some imitator, it would have claimed and received universal praise.

Samuel Johnson, 1779, *John Milton, Lives of the English Poets*

Readers would not be disappointed in this latter poem, if they proceeded to a perusal of it with a proper preconception of the kind of interest intended to be excited in that admirable work. In its kind it is the most perfect poem extant, though its kind may be inferior in interest—being in its essence didactic—to that other sort, in which instruction is conveyed more effectively, because less directly, in connection with stronger and more pleasurable emotions, and thereby in a closer affinity with action. But might we not as rationally object to an accomplished woman's conversing, however agreeably, because it has happened that we have received a keener pleasure from her singing to the harp?

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1807-18, *Lectures and Notes on Shakspeare*

That Milton was mistaken in preferring this work, excellent as it is, to *Paradise Lost,* we readily admit. But we are sure that the superiority of

Paradise Lost to *Paradise Regained* is not more decided, than the superiority of the *Paradise Regained* to every poem which has since made its appearance. But our limits prevent us from discussing the point at length. We hasten on to that extraordinary production, which the general suffrage of critics has placed in the highest class of human compositions.

Thomas Babington Macaulay, 1825, "Milton," *Edinburgh Review*; *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*

The neglect which *Paradise Lost* never experienced seems to have been long the lot of *Paradise Regained*. It was not popular with the world: it was long believed to manifest a decay of the poet's genius; and, in spite of all that the critics have written, it is still but the favourite of some whose predilections for the Miltonic style are very strong. The subject is so much less capable of calling forth the vast powers of his mind, that we should be unfair in comparing it throughout with the greater poem: it has been called a model of the shorter epic, an action comprehending few characters and a brief space of time. The love of Milton for dramatic dialogue, imbibed from Greece, is still more apparent than in *Paradise Lost:* the whole poem, in fact, may almost be accounted a drama of primal simplicity; the narrative and descriptive part serving rather to diversify and relieve the speeches of the actors, than their speeches, as in the legitimate epic, to enliven the narration. *Paradise Regained* abounds with passages equal to any of the same nature in *Paradise Lost;* but the argumentative tone is kept up till it produces some tediousness; and perhaps, on the whole, less pains have been exerted to adorn and elevate that which appeals to the imagination.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, pt. iv, ch. v, par. 35

As he grew older the taste of Milton grew more austere. The change in the character of his ornament is deeply marked when we ascend from the alpine meadows of *Paradise Lost* to the peaks of *Paradise Regained,* where the imaginative air is so highly rarefied that many readers find it difficult to breathe.

Edmund Gosse, 1897, *Short History of Modern English Literature*, p. 167

In this poem there is noticeable a distinct change from Milton's earlier manner,—a sudden purging away of ornament, a falling back on the naked concept, a preference for language as slightly as possible tinctured with metaphoric suggestion. A portion of this change may be due to failing vividness of imagination; certainly the abandonment of rapid narrative for tedious argumentation marks the increasing garrulity of age. Christ and Satan in the wilderness dispute with studied casuistry, until the sense of the

spiritual drama in which they are protagonists is almost lost. As this same weakness is apparent also in the later books of *Paradise Lost,* we must lay it largely to the score of flagging creative energy. But in still greater measure the change seems to be a deliberate experiment in style, or perhaps more truly a conscious reproduction, in language, of that rarefied mental atmosphere to which the author had climbed from the rich valley mists of his youth.

William Vaughn Moody, 1899, ed., *Poetical Works of Milton,* Cambridge ed., Life, p. xxxi

Samson Agonistes (1671)

I have lately read his *Samson,* which has more of the antique spirit than any production of any other modern poet. He is very great, and his own blindness enabled him to describe with so much truth the situation of Samson. Milton was really a poet; one to whom we owe all possible respect.

Johann Wolfgang Goethe, 1830, *Conversations with Eckermann,* tr. Oxenford, vol. III, p. 220

The tragedy of *Samson* breathes all the energy and simplicity of the antique. The poet himself is depicted in the person of the Israelite, blind, a prisoner, and unfortunate. A noble way of revenging himself on his age.

François René, Vicomte de Chateaubriand, 1837, *Sketches of English Literature,* vol. II, p. 106

Samson Agonistes, a tragedy, most elaborately composed, and on the severest Greek model, is uninviting both in its theme and the treatment of it; yet the dialogues abound with sublime and pious sentiments; while, though much of the versification is harsh, and scarcely reducible to metre, the diction throughout exemplifies the full strength and affluence of the English Language.

James Montgomery, 1843, ed., *The Poetical Works of John Milton, Memoir,* vol. I, p. xlviii

The opinions which critics have ventured on the versification of the choruses in *Samson Agonistes* would be sufficient proof that they had met with something not well understood, even if they had never misinterpreted the rhythm. It is not less than an absurdity to suppose that Milton's carefully-made verse could be unmusical: on the other hand it is easy to see how the far-sought effects of the greatest master in any art may lie beyond the general taste.

Robert Bridges, 1889-93, *Milton Prosody,* p. 32

Sonnets

They deserve not any particular criticism; for of the best it can only be said, that they are not bad; and perhaps only the eighth and twenty-first are truly entitled to this slender commendation.

Samuel Johnson, 1779, *John Milton, Lives of the English Poets*

The sonnets of Milton, like those of Danté, are frequently deficient in sweetness of diction and harmony of versification, yet they possess, what seldom is discernible in compositions of this kind, energy and sublimity of sentiment. The sonnets to Cyriac Skinner, to Fairfax, Cromwell, and Vane, are remarkable for these qualities, and for vigour of expression, whilst those addressed to the Nightingale and to Mr. Laurence, can boast, I may venture to assert, both of melody in language and elegance in thought. It should also be observed, that Milton has altogether avoided the quaint and metaphysic concetti of Petrarch.

Nathan Drake, 1798-1820, *Literary Hours*, vol. I, p. 80

The sonnets are more or less striking, according as the occasions which gave birth to them are more or less interesting. But they are, almost without exception, dignified by a sobriety and greatness of mind to which we know not where to look for a parallel.

Thomas Babington Macaulay, 1825, "Milton," *Edinburgh Review; Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*

Milton's English Sonnets are only seventeen in all:

"Soul-animating strains, alas! too few."

They are so far beyond all question the noblest in the language that it is a matter of curious interest to note the utter incapacity of Johnson to recognize any greatness in them at all. The utmost which he will allow is that "three of them are not bad"; and he and Hannah More once set themselves to investigate the causes of their badness, the badness itself being taken for granted. Johnson's explanation of this contains a lively illustration: "Why, Madam," he said, "Milton's was a genius that could hew a Colossus out of a rock, but could not carve heads on cherrystones."

Richard Chenevix Trench, 1868, *A Household Book of English Poetry*

They differ from all the sonnets of the time, in that they are simple in thought and unstudied in expression, and that they convince us of the entire sincerity of the singer. We feel that they were not written because other poets had made a reputation by such compositions, but because their writer

had something to say, and knew that the best way for him to say it was in this form. If he had read Shakspere and Drummond, or Drayton and Daniel, he forgot them in his remembrance of Petrarch, whose form he mastered, at the age of twenty-three, as no English poet since Sidney had done. They do not read like the productions of a young man, for they are mature in conception and severe in execution—demanding our deepest respect as well as our highest admiration. The credentials of a strong intellect, which knows itself and the work it has to do, their gravity is Shaksperean. They bear a weight of thought which had never before laid upon the English sonnet, and they bear it lightly as a flower.

Richard Henry Stoddard, 1881, "The Sonnet in English Poetry," *Scribner's Monthly*, vol. 22, p. 915

Hallam and certain other writers have declared themselves unable to reconcile their judgment to the frequent violation of the legitimate structure in Milton's sonnets. It is true that the pause between the major and minor portions of the sonnet (so uniformly observed in the best Italian examples) is not to be found in Milton, but the rhyme-scheme is always faultlessly in conformity with the most rigid rule, and the sonnets, even where they link themselves together—as in the cases of the two divorce sonnets and the two sonnets on his blindness—stand alone in self-centered unity, and never become sonnet stanzas. The serious divergence favoured by Milton in his practice of running octave into sestet was clearly the result of a deliberate conviction that the sonnet in his hands was too short a poem to be broken into halves, and hence his sonnets, each done in a breath as to metrical flow, possess the intellectual unity of oneness of conception, at the same time that they are devoid of the twofold metrical and intellectual unity which comes of the rounded perfectness of linked and contrasted parts. Much may be said for the beauty of the sonnet structure adopted by Milton, and indeed the model has been so much in requisition in recent years, that it appears to merit the distinct nomenclature which, in the index of metrical groups, I have ventured to give it.

Hall Caine, 1882, ed., *Sonnets of Three Centuries*, p. 280

Some of Milton's most famous sonnets were never published in his lifetime. They were not even printed until 1694, and then from copies which had been circulating from hand to hand in manuscript. It was not until 1753 that the text was published from the originals. These at once made it plain that the variations which had crept in were, with one possible exception, variations for the worse, and, in some instances, grossly for the worse.

Thomas R. Lounsbury, 1892, *Studies in Chaucer*, vol. I, p. 232

His sonnets were no chamber exercises: each owed its inspiration to a real occasion, and that inspiration of reality lifted it high above mere simulation of the Horatian mode.

A. T. Quiller-Couch, 1897, *English Sonnets,* Introduction, p. xvi

On the Morning of Christ's Nativity (1629)

The most distinct foreshadowing of Milton's great epic poem, and of his own independent genius, is an earlier poem—*The Hymn of the Nativity*—which gives the poet the fame of having composed almost in his youth the earliest of the great English odes, the like of which had not, I believe, been heard, since Pindar, two thousand years before, had struck the lyre for assembled Greece. It is a lyric that might have burst from that religious bard of paganism, could he have had prophetic vision of the Advent. It is a poem that revealed a new mastery of English versification, disciplined afterward to such power in the blank verse of *Paradise Lost.* Nothing in the way of meter can be grander than some of the transitions from the gentle music of the quiet passages to the passionate parts, and their deep reverberating lines that seem to go echoing on, spiritually sounding, long after they are heard no more.

Henry Reed, 1855, *Lectures on English Literature, from Chaucer to Tennyson,* p. 193

When, at the close of 1629, Milton began his *Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity,* he was still closely imitating the form of these favourites of his, the Fletchers, until the fifth stanza was reached, and then he burst away in a magnificent measure of his own, pouring forth that hymn which carried elaborate lyrical writing higher than it had ever been taken before in England.

Edmund Gosse, 1897, *Short History of Modern English Literature,* p. 143

The *Hymn* may be reckoned the first fully opened flower of Milton's poetic springtime. . . . It would be difficult to find a poem that would better exemplify certain of the characteristics of a lyric poem than does the *Hymn on the Nativity.* The religious fervor of the young poet informs every stanza of the poem; the pictures are painted for their dynamic emotional value only; the language is adorned with "rich and various gems" of expression; the sentiment is elevated; the metrical form is graceful and harmonious with the thought.

Albert Perry Walker, 1900, ed., *Selections from the Poetical Works of John Milton,* p. 257

L'Allegro and Il Penseroso (1633)

I have heard a very judicious critic say, that he had an higher idea of Milton's style in poetry from the two following poems, than from his *Paradise Lost*. It is certain the imagination shewn in them is correct and strong. The introduction to both in irregular measure is borrowed from the Italians, and hurts an English ear.

Oliver Goldsmith, 1767, *The Beauties of English Poetry*

Of all the English poems in the descriptive style, the richest and most remarkable are, Milton's *Allegro* and *Penseroso*. The collection of gay images on the one hand, and of melancholy ones on the other, exhibited in these two small, but inimitably fine poems, are as exquisite as can be conceived. They are, indeed, the storehouse whence many succeeding poets have enriched their descriptions of similar subjects; and they alone are sufficient for illustrating the observations which I made, concerning the proper selection of circumstances in descriptive writing.

Hugh Blair, 1783, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres*, ed. Mills, Lecture xl, p. 454

We find nowhere in his writings that whining sensibility and exaggeration of morbid feeling, which makes so much of modern poetry effeminating. If he is not gay, he is not spirit-broken. His *L'Allegro* proves, that he understood thoroughly the bright and joyous aspects of nature; and in his *Penseroso,* where he was tempted to accumulate images of gloom, we learn, that the saddest views which he took of creation, are such as inspire only pensive musing or lofty contemplation.

William Ellery Channing ,1826, *Remarks of the Character and Writings of John Milton*

As for *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* who shall praise them fitly? They are among the few things about which there is no difference of opinion, which are as delightful to childhood as to criticism, to youth as to age. To dwell on their technical excellences (the chief of which is the unerring precision with which the catalectic and acatalectic lines are arranged and interchanged) has a certain air of impertinence about it. Even a critical King Alfonso El Sabio could hardly think it possible that Milton might have taken a hint here, although some persons have, it seems, been disturbed because skylarks do not come to the window, just as others are troubled because the flowers in *Lycidas* do not grow at the same time, and because they think they could see stars through the "starproof" trees of the "Arcades."

George Saintsbury, 1887, *History of Elizabethan Literature*, p. 320

Of course Milton's *Il Penseroso* and *L'Allegro* have far more value even as country poems than hundreds of more literal transcripts. From a literary point of view indeed the juxtapositions of half a dozen epithets alone would prove the genius of the writer. But there are no sharp outlines; the scholar pauses in his walk to peer across the watered flat, or raises his eyes from his book to see the quiver of leaves upon the sunlit wall; he notes an effect it may be; but his images do not come like treasures lavished from a secret storehouse of memory.

Arthur Christopher Benson, 1896, *Essays*, p. 71

The language of these two little masterpieces has been the despair of poets. It is not that it is so beautiful, for others have equaled or excelled it in the mere conjuring power of suggestion; but that it is, as a French critic has finely said, so *just* in its beauty. The means are exquisitely proportioned to the end. The speech incarnates the thought as easily, as satisfyingly, as the muscles of a Phidian youth incarnate the motor-impulse of his brain. Always fruition is just gently touched. To the connoisseur in language there is a sensation of almost physical soothing in its perfect poise and play.

William Vaugn Moody, 1899, ed., *Poetical Works of Milton*, Cambridge ed., p. 26

Prose Writings

His prose writings disagreeable, though not altogether defective in genius.

David Hume, 1762, *History of England, The Commonwealth*

"Our language," says Addison, "sunk under him." But the truth is, that, both in prose and verse, he had formed his style by a perverse and pedantick principle. He was desirous to use English words with foreign idiom. This in all his prose is discovered and condemned; for there judgement operates freely, neither softened by the beauty nor awed by the dignity of his thoughts; but such is the power of his poetry, that his call is obeyed without resistance, the reader feels himself in captivity to a higher and nobler mind, and criticism sinks in admiration.

Samuel Johnson, 1779, *Milton, Lives of the English Poets*

Dr. Johnson endeavoured to give an air of dignity and novelty to his diction by affecting the order of words usual in poetry. Milton's prose has not only this drawback, but it has also the disadvantage of being formed on a classical model. It is like a fine translation from the Latin; and, indeed, he wrote originally in Latin. . . . Milton's prose-style savours too much of poetry, and, as I have already hinted, of an imitation of the Latin.

William Hazlitt, 1821-22, "On the Prose Style of Poets," *Table-Talk*

It is to be regretted that the prose writings of Milton should, in our time, be so little read. As compositions, they deserve the attention of every man who wishes to become acquainted with the full power of the English language. They abound with passages, compared with which the finest declamations of Burke sink into insignificance. They are a perfect field of cloth of gold. The style is stiff, with gorgeous embroidery. Not even in the earlier books of the *Paradise Lost* has he ever risen higher than in those parts of his controversial works, in which his feelings, excited by conflict, find a vent in bursts of devotional and lyric rapture. It is, to borrow his own majestic language, "a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies."

Thomas Babington Macaulay, 1825, "Milton," *Edinburgh Review; Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*

Concerning Milton's style the most diverse opinions have been pronounced. Everything depends upon the point of view. Rich and powerful it is undeniably, coming from such a master of words, and yields in the highest degree the pleasure of luxurious expression. But the student need hardly be warned that Milton's prose is to be enjoyed without being imitated: for modern purposes the language and idiom are too stiffly Latinised, and the imagery too fantastic. Further, for a work of controversy the style is too ornate, too unmethodical, and too coarsely vituperative to have much convincing or converting power. In Milton still more than in Taylor the application is lost in the gorgeous splendour of words and imagery, and all but decided adherents are repelled by the unmeasured discharge of abuse and ridicule.

William Minto, 1872-80, *Manual of English Prose Literature*, p. 308

Milton's prose works are perhaps not read, at the present day, to the extent demanded by their great and varied merits, among which may be named their uncompromising advocacy of whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report; their eloquent assertion of the inalienable rights of men to a wholesome exercise of their intellectual faculties, the right to determine for themselves, with all the aids they can command, what is truth and what is error; the right freely to communicate their honest thoughts from one to another,—rights which constitute the only sure and lasting foundation of individual, civil, political, and religious liberty; the ever-conscious sentiment which they exhibit, on the part of the poet, of an entire dependence upon "that Eternal Spirit, who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his Seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases"; the ever-present consciousness they exhibit of that stewardship which every man as a probationer of immortality must render an account, according to the full measure of the talents with which he has been intrusted—of the sacred obligation,

incumbent upon every one, of acting throughout the details of life, private or public, trivial or momentous, "as ever in his great Task-Master's eye."

Hiram Corson, 1899, *An Introduction to the Prose and Poetical Works of John Milton*, p. xiii

The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce (1643)

It is a great deal easier to pass by Milton, or to sneer at him, for his great work on *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce,* than to answer the arguments therein contained.

Arthur Helps, 1851, *Companions of My Solitude*, p. 147

If the early date of the pamphlet be the true date; if the *Doctrine and Discipline* was in the hands of the public on August 1; if Milton was brooding over this seething agony of passion all through July, with the young bride, to whom he had been barely wedded a month, in the house where he was writing, then the only apology for this outrage upon the charities, not to say decencies, of home is that which is suggested by the passage referred to. Then the pamphlet, however imprudent, becomes pardonable. It is a passionate cry from the depths of a great despair; another evidence of the noble purity of a nature which refused to console itself as other men would have consoled themselves; a nature which, instead of an egotistical whine for its own deliverance, sets itself to plead the common cause of man and of society. He gives no intimation of any individual interest, but his argument throughout glows with a white heat of concealed emotion, such as could only be stirred by the sting of some personal and present misery.

Mark Pattison, 1879, *Milton (English Men of Letters)*, p. 55

Of Milton's pamphlet it is everyone's duty to speak with profound respect. It is a noble and passionate cry for a high ideal of married life, which, so he argued, had by inflexible laws been changed into a drooping and disconsolate household captivity, without refuge or redemption. . . . This pamphlet on divorce marks the beginning of Milton's mental isolation. Nobody had a word to say for it. Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Independent held his doctrine in as much abhorrence as did the Catholic, and all alike regarded its author as either an impracticable dreamer or worse.

Augustine Birrell, 1887, *Obiter Dicta, Second Series*, pp. 22, 23

Areopagitica (1644)

It would not be easy to discover, in the whole stream and succession of literary productions any thing more cogent and forcible than this tract.

William Goodwin, 1824, *History of the Commonwealth of England*, vol. I, p. 352

He attacked the licensing system in that sublime treatise which every statesman should wear as a sign upon his hand, and as frontlets between his eyes.

Thomas Babington Macaulay, 1825, "Milton," *Edinburgh Review; Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*

The most splendid argument perhaps the world had then witnessed on behalf of intellectual liberty.

William Hickling Prescott, 1845, *History of Ferdinand and Isabella,* vol. III, p. 391

The *Paradise Lost* is, indeed, scarcely a more glorious monument of the genius of Milton than that *Areopagitica*. If, even at the present day, when the cause for which it was written has long since triumphed, it is impossible to read it without emotion, we can hardly doubt that when it first appeared it exercised a mighty influence over the awakening movement of liberty.

William Edward Hartpole Lecky, 1865, *Spirit of Rationalism in Europe,* vol. II

All who care for English literature have read the *Areopagitica*. It is the most literary of Milton's pamphlets, eloquent, to the point, and full of noble images splendidly wrought and fitted to their place. Its defence of books and the freedom of books will last as long as there are writers and readers of books. Its scorn of the censorship of writing is only excelled by its uplifted praise of true writing.

Stopford Brooke, 1879, *Milton, (Classical Writers),* p. 45

The right of the *Areopagitica* to rank as best, as it is clearly the most popular, of Milton's prose works, has been disputed by the jealous admirers of others. The popularity, no doubt due in part to the subject, is also to be ascribed to the greater equability and clearness of style. If he does not soar to quite such heights, there are fewer descents and contortions, and it remains at a high level of lofty eloquence.

Leslie Stephen, 1894, *Dictionary of National Biography,* vol. XXXVIII, p. 29

General

It is not any private respect of gain, Gentle Reader (for the slightest Pamphlet is nowadays more vendible than the works of learnedest men), but it is the love I have to our own Language that hath made me diligent to collect and set forth such Pieces, both in Prose and Verse, as may renew the wonted honour and esteem of our English tongue; and it's the worth of these both

English and Latin Poems, not the flourish of any prefixed encomions, that can invite thee to buy them—though these are not without the highest commendations and applause of the learnedest Academicks, both domestic and foreign, and, amongst those of our own country, the unparalleled attestation of that renowned Provost of Eton, Sir Henry Wootton. . . . The Author's more peculiar excellency in those studies was too well known to conceal his Papers, or to keep me from attempting to solicit them from him. Let the event guide itself which way it will, I shall deserve of the age by bringing into the light as true a birth as the Muses have brought forth since our famous Spenser wrote; whose Poems in these English ones are as rarely imitated as sweetly excelled. Reader, if thou art eagle-eyed to censure their worth, I am not fearful to expose them to thy exactest perusal.

Humph. Moseley, 1645, *Milton's Poems, The Stationer to the Reader*

John Milton was one whose natural parts might deservedly give him a place amongst the principal of our English Poets, having written two Heroick Poems and a Tragedy, namely *Paradice Lost, Paradice Regain'd,* and *Sampson Agonista.* But his Fame is gone out like a Candle in a Snuff, and his Memory will always stink, which might have ever lived in honourable Repute, had not he been a notorious Traytor, and most impiously and villanously bely'd that blessed Martyr, King *Charles* the First.

William Winstanley, 1668, *The Lives of the Most Famous English Poets*

Milton was forced to wait till the world had done admiring Quarles.

Horace Walpole, 1757, *Letters,* ed. Cunningham, Aug. 25, vol. III, p. 99

The best example of an exquisite ear that I can produce. . . . The more we attend to the composition of Milton's harmony, the more we shall be sensible how he loved to vary his pauses, his measures, and his feet, which gives that enchanting air of freedom and wildness to his versification, unconfined by any rules but those which his own feeling and the nature of his subject demanded. Thus he mixes the line of eight syllables with that of seven, the Trochee and the Spondee with the Iambic foot, and the single rhyme with the double.

Thomas Gray, 1761?, "Observations on English Metre," *Essays, Works,* vol. I, p. 332

It is, however, remarkable that the greatest genius by far that shone out in England during this period was deeply engaged with these fanatics, and even

prostituted his pen in theological controversy in factious disputes, and in justifying the most violent measures of the party. This was John Milton, whose poems are admirable, though liable to some objections; his prose writings disagreeable, though not altogether defective in genius. Nor are all his poems equal; his *Paradise Lost,* his *Comus,* and a few others, shine out amidst some flat and insipid compositions; even in *Paradise Lost,* his capital performance, there are very long passages, amounting to near a third of the work, almost wholly destitute of harmony and elegance, nay of all vigour of imagination. This natural inequality in Milton's genius was much increased by the inequalities in his subject; of which some parts are of themselves the most lofty that can enter into human conception, others would have required the most laboured elegance of composition to support them. It is certain, that this author, when in a happy mood, and employed on a noble subject, is the most wonderfully sublime of any poet in any language, Homer and Lucretius and Tasso not excepted. More concise than Homer, more simple than Tasso, more nervous than Lucretius; had he lived in a later age, and learned to polish some rudeness in his verses; had he enjoyed better fortune, and possessed leisure to watch the returns of genius in himself, he had attained the pinnacle of perfection, and borne away the palm of epic poetry.

David Hume, 1762, *The History of England, The Commonwealth*

If, fallen in evil days on evil tongues,
Milton appeal'd to the Avenger, Time,
If Time, the Avenger, execrates his wrongs,
And makes the word "Miltonic" mean *sublime,*
He deign'd not to belie his soul in songs,
Nor turn his very talent to a crime;
He did not loathe the Sire to laud the Son,
But closed the tyrant-hater he begun.

Lord Byron, 1818, *Don Juan,* Dedication

Chief of organic numbers!
Old Scholar of the Spheres!
Thy spirit never slumbers,
But rolls about our ears,
For ever, and for ever!
O what a mad endeavour
Worketh he,
Who to thy sacred and ennobled hearse
Would offer a burnt sacrifice of verse
And melody.

John Keats, 1818 [published 1848], *On a Lock of Milton's Hair*

This character of power runs through all Milton's works. His descriptions of nature show a free and bold hand. He has no need of the minute, graphic skill which we prize in Cowper or Crabbe. With a few strong or delicate touches, he impresses, as it were, his own mind on the scenes which he would describe, and kindles the imagination of the gifted reader to clothe them with the same radiant hues under which they appeared to his own. This attribute of power is universally felt to characterize Milton. His sublimity is in every man's mouth. Is it felt that his poetry breathes a sensibility and tenderness hardly surpassed by its sublimity? We apprehend that the grandeur of Milton's mind has thrown some shade over his milder beauties; and this it has done, not only by being more striking and imposing, but by the tendency of vast mental energy to give a certain calmness to the expression of tenderness and deep feeling.

William Ellery Channing, 1826, *Remarks on the Character and Writings of John Milton*

Milton was abundantly skilled in the dialectic art; he had a divine intuition into the logic of poetry; but he was not particularly remarkable, among men of genius, for penetrating and comprehensive intellect. This is very clear from his political and theological writings. His scheme of Government is that of a purely ideal commonwealth, and has the fault common to the greater number of such conceptions, that it never could be practised, except among beings for whom no government at all would be necessary. His opinions as to a Church Establishment are of an exactly similar description; and no imagination less powerful than his could have realized such visions to any mind. Nor could these phantom plans have obtained, in the thoughts of a nation, the living force necessary to their action, unless every man had been able to breathe into them from himself a breath of existence as powerful as that with which they were imbued by their creator.

John Sterling, 1829, "Shades of the Dead," *Essays and Tales*, ed. Hare, vol. I, p. 76

Milton was not an extensive or discursive thinker, as Shakspeare was; for the motions of his mind were slow, solemn, sequacious, like those of the planets; not agile and assimilative; not attracting all things within its own sphere; not multiform: repulsion was the law of his intellect—he moved in solitary grandeur. Yet, merely from this quality of grandeur, unapproachable grandeur, his intellect demanded a larger infusion of Latinity into his diction. For the same reason (and without such aids he would have had no proper element in which to move his wings) he enriched his diction with

Hellenisms and with Hebraisms; but never, as could be easy to show, without a full justification in the result. Two things may be asserted of all his exotic idioms—1st, That they express what could not have been expressed by any native idiom; 2nd, That they harmonize with the English language, and give a colouring of the antique, but not any sense of strangeness, to the diction.

Thomas De Quincey, 1835, *Autobiography from 1803 to 1808, Collected Writings,* ed. Masson, vol. II, p. 69

He must not be ranked with Shakespeare. He stands relative to Shakespeare as Tasso or Ariosto does to Dante, as Virgil to Homer. He is conscious of writing an epic, and of being the great man he is. No great man ever felt so great a consciousness as Milton. That consciousness was the measure of his greatness; he was not one of those who reach into actual contact with the deep fountain of greatness. His *Paradise Lost* is not an epic in its composition as Shakespeare's utterances are epic. It does not come out of the heart of things; he hadn't it lying there to pour it out in one gush; it seems rather to have been welded together afterward. His sympathies with things are much narrower than Shakespeare's—too sectarian. In universality of mind there is no hatred; it doubtless rejects what is displeasing, but not in hatred for it. Everything has a right to exist. Shakespeare was not polemical: Milton was polemical altogether.

Thomas Carlyle, 1838, *Lectures on the History of Literature,* p. 165

There is no name in English literature between his age and ours that rises into any approach to his own. . . . Leaving out of view the pretensions of our contemporaries (always an incalculable influence), we think no man can be named whose mind still acts on the cultivated intellect of England and America with an energy comparable to that of Milton. As a poet, Shakspeare undoubtedly transcends, and far surpasses him in his popularity with foreign nations; but Shakspeare is a voice merely; who and what he was that sang, that sings, we know not. Milton stands erect, commanding, still visible as a man among men, and reads the laws of the moral sentiment to the newborn race. There is something pleasing in the affection with which we can regard a man who died a hundred and sixty years ago in the other hemisphere, who, in respect to personal relations, is to us as the wind, yet by an influence purely spiritual makes us jealous for his fame as for that of a near friend. He is identified in the mind with all select and holy images, with the supreme interests of the human race.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1838, *Milton*

It is certain that Milton deals with the invisible more than any other poet that ever lived. . . . Milton has not the spontaneity of imagination that distinguishes Shakespeare, nor has he so large a nature, but his sense of form is more unfailing, and in loftiness of character he towers far above the bard of Avon. Puritan as he is, he is more of an aristocrat, and more of a man, than is Shakespeare. His nobility of poetic form is but the expression of a lofty soul, thrilled to the center of its being with the greatest of possible themes—the struggle of good and evil, of God and Satan, and the triumph of the Almighty in the redemption of man. When this theme grows old, then will *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* grow old. But so long as man recognizes and values his own immortality, so long will the poetry of Milton vindicate its claim to be immortal.

Augustus Hopkins Strong, 1897, *The Great Poets and Their Theology*, pp. 246, 256

Milton's lyric style is not so purely lyrical and personal; it is rather idyllic and objective. In this he is in a measure the poetic son of Spenser; and he, too, last of the Elizabethans, has a certain turn of lyric rhythm and phrase never afterwards recaptured. *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* are the objective and idyllic presentations of the two fundamental subjective states of the human soul. In these poems all the rhythmical witchery and the subtle beauty of symbolism developed or suggested in the lyrics of Spenser, Shakespeare, Campion, Fletcher, Drummond, and Browne, is taken up and carried into the last perfection of English idyllic metre and fancy. And the *Lycidas* carries on the vein of earlier Ode and Elegy to a like perfection. Through all the concrete symbolism of these poems, however, we read the suggestion of the new ethical and subjective mood of the time, saturated with and subdued to the genius of the man Milton.

Frederic Ives Carpenter, 1897, *English Lyric Poetry*, 1500-1700, Introduction, p. liv

That the influence of Milton, in the romantic revival of the eighteenth century, should have been hardly second in importance to Spenser's is a confirmation of our remark that Augustan literature was "classical" in a way of its own. . . . Milton is the most truly classical of English poets; and yet, from the angle of observation at which the eighteenth century viewed him, he appeared a romantic. It was upon his romantic side, at all events, that the new school of poets apprehended and appropriated him.

Henry A. Beers, 1898, *A History of English Romanticism*, p. 146

ANDREW MARVELL
1621-1678

Born, at Winestead-in-Holderness, Yorks, 31 March 1621. Educated at Hull Grammar School, of which his father was master. Matric. Trin. Coll., Camb., as Sizar, 14 Dec. 1633; Scholar, 13 April 1638; B. A., 1638. Left Cambridge, 1641. Travelled abroad. Tutor to daughter of Lord Fairfax, 1650 (?)-53. Tutor to William Dutton (a ward of Oliver Cromwell), 1653-57; lived at Eton. Assistant to Milton (as Sec. of Foreign Tongues), 1657. M. P. for Hull, in Cromwell's Parliament, 1660; re-elected Dec. 1660 and April 1661. On Embassy to Russia, Sweden, and Denmark with Earl of Carlisle, July 1663 to Jan. 1665. Prolific political and ecclesiastical controversial writer. Died, suddenly, in London, 18 Aug. 1678; buried in the church of St. Giles-in-the-Fields. Probably married. WORKS: *The First Anniversary of the Government,* 1655; *The Character of Holland,* 1655; *Clarendon's House-Warming,* 1667; *The Rehearsal Transpos'd,* pt. i. (anon.), 1672; pt. ii., 1673; *An Apology and Advice for some of the Clergy,* 1674; *Dialogue between Two Horses,* 1675; *Plain Dealing* (under initials: A. M.), 1675; *A Letter from a Parliament Man to his Friend* (anon.); attrib. to Marvell), 1675; *Mr. Smirke* (under pseud.: *Andreas Rivetus, Junior*), 1686; *A Seasonable Question and a Useful Answer* (anon.; attrib. to Marvell), 1676; *An Account of the Growth of Popery . . . in England* (anon.), 1677; *A Seasonable Argument to persuade all the Grand Juries in England to petition for a new Parliament* (anon.; attrib. to Marvell), 1677; *Advice to a Painter* (anon.), 1678; *Remarks upon a disengenuous Discourse writ by one T. D.* (anon.), 1678. POSTHUMOUS: *A Short Historical Essay touching General Councils,* 1680; *Miscellaneous Poems,* 1681; *Characters of Popery,* 1689; *Poems on Affairs of State,* 1689; *The Royal Manual,* 1751. He contributed poems to *Musa Cantabrigiensis,* 1637; *Lacrymæ Musarum,* 1639; Lovelace's *Poems,* 1649; Primerose's *Popular Errors,* 1651; *Paradise Lost,* 2nd edn., 1674; and probably *translated*: Suetonius, 1672. COLLECTED WORKS: ed. by T. Cooke (2 vols.), 1726; ed. by E. Thompson (3 vols.), 1776; ed. by Grosart (4 vols.), 1872-75; *Poems and Satires,* ed. by G. A. Aitken (2 vols.), 1892. LIFE: by J. Dove, 1832.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 189

SEE: *Poems and Letters,* ed. H. M. Margoliouth, 1927, rev. 1952, 2 v; *Andrew Marvell, 1621-1678, Tercentenary Tributes,* ed. W. H. Bagguley, 1922; Pierre Legouis, *Andrew Marvell,* 1965 (revision, abridgement, and translation of his *Marvell: poète, puritan, patriote,* 1928, published in Paris in limited edition); M. C. Bradbrook and M. G. Lloyd, *Andrew Marvell,* 1940, rev. 1962.

PERSONAL

There will be with you to-morrow, upon some occasion of business, a gentleman whose name is Mr. Marvile; a man whom, both by report, and the con-

verse I have had with him, of singular desert for the state to make use of; who alsoe offers himselfe, if there be any imployment for him. His father was the Minister of Hull; and he hath spent four years abroad, in Holland, France, Italy, and Spaine, to very good purpose, as I believe, and the gaineing of those four languages; besides, he is a scholler, and well read in the Latin and Greek authors; and no doubt of an approved conversation, for he comes now lately out of the house of the Lord Fairfax, who was Generall, where he was intrusted to give some instructions in the languages to the Lady his daughter.

John Milton, 1652, *Letter to Lord Bradshaw, Feb. 21*

He was of a middling stature, pretty strong sett, roundish faced, cherry cheek't, hazell eie, browne haire. He was in his conversation very modest, and of very few words; and though he loved wine he would never drinke hard in company, and was wont to say that, *he would not play the good-fellow in any man's company in whose hands he would not trust his life.* . . . He lies interred under the pewes in the south side of Saint Giles' church in-the-fields, under the window wherein is painted in glasse a red lyon, (it was given by the inneholder of the Red Lyon Inne in Holborne) and is the . . . window from the east. This account I had from the sexton that made his grave.

John Aubrey, 1669-96, *Brief Lives,* ed. Clark, vol. II, pp. 53, 54

As neither wits nor poets have been always remarkable for moral firmness, and are as vulnerable in their vanity and fears as politicians in their avarice and ambition, no means were omitted to win over Marvell. He was threatened, he was flattered, he was thwarted, he was caressed, he was beset with spies, and, if all tales be true, he was way-laid by ruffians, and courted by beauties. But no Dalilah could discover the secret of his strength: his integrity was proof alike against danger and against corruption; nor was it enervated by that flattery, which, more frequently than either, seduces those weak, amiable creatures, whom, for lack of better, we are fain to call good. Against threats and bribes, pride is the ally of principle; but how often has virtue pined away to a shadow, by too fondly contemplating its own image, reflected by insidious praise; as Narcissus, in the fable, consumed his beauty by gazing on its watery shade. In a Court which held no man to be honest, and no woman chaste, this soft sorcery was cultivated to perfection; but Marvell, revering and respecting himself, was proof against its charms. There is a story told of his refusing a bribe, which has been heard and repeated by many, who perhaps did not know in what king's reign he lived, and which has been so often paralleled with the turnips of Curius, and the like common places, that some sceptical persons have held that there is as

little truth in the one as in the other. However, we believe it to have been founded in fact, and that the mistake has been in the dulness of those who took a piece of dry English humour for a stoical exhibition of virtue.

Hartley Coleridge, 1833(?), *Biographia Borealis*, p. 57

On The Death Of The Lord Protector

There is a splendid Ode to Cromwell—a worthy companion of Milton's glorious sonnet—which is not generally known, and which we transfer entire to our pages. Its simple dignity, and the melodious flow of its versification, commend themselves more to our feelings than its eulogy of war. It is energetic and impassioned, and probably affords a better idea of the author, as an actor in the stirring drama of his time, than the "soft Lydian airs" of the poems that we have quoted.

John Greenleaf Whittier, 1849, *Old Portraits and Modern Sketches*, p. 105

Marvell showed how well he understood what he was giving to the world in this ode—one of the least known but among the grandest which the English language possesses—when he called it "Horatian." In its whole treatment it reminds us of the highest to which the greatest Latin Artist in lyrical poetry did, when at his best, attain. To one unacquainted with Horace, this ode, not perhaps so perfect as his are in form, and with occasional obscurities of expression which Horace would not have left, will give a truer notion of the kind of greatness which he achieved than, so far as I know, could from any other poem in the language be obtained.

Richard Chenevix Trench, 1868, *Household Book of English Poetry*

Marvell's "Horatian Ode," the most truly classic in our language, is worthy of its theme. The same poet's Elegy, in parts noble, and everywhere humanly tender, is worth more than all Carlyle's biography as a witness to the gentler qualities of the hero, and of the deep affection that stalwart nature could inspire in hearts of truly masculine temper.

James Russell Lowell, 1870, "Dryden," *Among My Books*, p. 19

The *Horatian Ode on Cromwell's Return from Ireland* cannot be positively proved to be the work of Marvell. Yet we can hardly doubt that he was its author. The point of view and the sentiment, combining admiration of Cromwell with respect and pity for Charles, are exactly his: the classical form would be natural to him; and so would the philosophical conceit which disfigures the eleventh stanza. The epithet "indefatigable" applied to Crom-

well recurs in a poem which is undoubtedly his; and so does the emphatic expression of belief that the hero could have been happier in private life, and that he sacrificed himself to the State in taking the supreme command. The compression and severity of style are not characteristic of Marvell; but they would be imposed on him in this case by his model. If the ode is really his, to take it from him would do him great wrong. It is one of the noblest in the English language, and worthily presents the figures and events of the great tragedy as they would impress themselves on the mind of an ideal spectator, at once feeling and dispassionate.

Goldwin Smith, 1880, *English Poets,* ed. Ward, vol. II, p. 383

The pre-eminent quality of the poem is its art; and its singular charm is the fact that it succeeds, in spite of being artificial, in moving and touching the springs of feeling in an extraordinary degree. It is a unique piece in the collection, the one instance where Marvell's undoubted genius burned steadily through a whole poem. Here he flied *penna metuente solvi.* It is in completeness more than in quality that it is superior to all his other work, but in quality too it has that lurking divinity that cannot be analysed or imitated.

Arthur Christopher Benson, 1896, *Essays,* p. 84

General

His pen was always properly directed, and had some effect upon such as were under no check or restraint from any laws human or divine. He hated corruption more than he dreaded poverty; and was so far from being venal, that he could not be bribed by the king into silence, when he scarce knew how to procure a dinner. His satires give us a higher idea of his patriotism, parts, and learning, than of his skill as a poet.

James Granger, 1769-1824, *Biographical History of England,* vol. V, p. 252

The humour and eloquence of Marvell's prose tracts were admired and probably imitated by Swift. In playful exuberance of figure he sometimes resembles Burke. For consistency of principles, it is not so easy to find his parallel. His few poetical pieces betray some adherence to the school of conceit, but there is much in it that comes from the heart warm, pure, and affectionate.

Thomas Campbell, 1819, *Specimens of the British Poets*

The characteristic of Marvell's genius was unquestionably wit. . . . Though Marvell was so great a master of wit, and especially of that caustic species which is appropriate to satirists, we will venture to say that he was singularly

free from many of the faults which distinguish that irritable brotherhood. Unsparing and merciless as his ridicule is, contemptuous and ludicrous as are the lights in which he exhibits his opponent; nay, further, though his invectives are not only often terribly severe, but (in compliance with the spirit of the age) often grossly coarse and personal, it is still impossible to detect a single particle of malignity. His general tone is that of broad laughing banter, or of the most cutting invective; but he appears equally devoid of malevolence in both. . . . His Latin poems are amongst his best. The composition often shows no contemptible skill in that language; and here and there the diction and versification are such as would not have absolutely disgraced his great coadjutor, Milton. In all the higher poetic qualities there can of course be no comparison between them. . . . The style of Marvell is very unequal. Though often rude and unpolished, it abounds in negligent felicities, presents us with frequent specimens of vigorous idiomatic English, and now and then attains no mean degree of elegance. It bears the stamp of the revolution which was then passing on the language; it is a medium between the involved and periodic structure so common during the former half of the century, and which is ill adapted to a language possessing so few inflections as ours, and that simplicity and harmony which were not fully attained till the age of Addison.

Henry Rogers, 1844, "Andrew Marvell," *Edinburgh Review*, vol. 79, pp. 92, 99, 100

Marvell holds a unique place in the seventeenth century. He stands at the parting of the ways, between the extravagancies of the lyrical Jacobeans on the one hand, and the new formalism initiated by Waller on the other. He is not unaffected by either influence. The modish handling of the decasyllable couplet is very marked here and there. . . . Marvell is a Puritan; but his spirit has not entered the prison-house, nor has the key turned on it there. He is a poet still, such as there has been few in any age. The lyric gift of Herrick he has not, nor Donne's incomparable subtlety and intensity of emotion; but for imaginative power, for decent melody, for that self-restraint of phrase which is the fair half of art, he must certainly hold high rank among his fellows. The clear sign of this self-restraint is his mastery over the octosyllable couplet. . . . I must needs see in Marvell something of a nature-philosophy strangely anticipative of George Meredith. For the one, as for the other, complete absorption in nature, the unreserved abandonment of self to the skyey influences, is the really true and sanative wisdom.

Edmund K. Chambers, 1892, *The Academy*, vol. 42, p. 230

Marvell's literary work is remarkable for its variety. In his own age his reputation rested mainly on his pamphlets, which have ceased to be read

since the controversies which gave rise to them have been forgotten. . . . To the generation which immediately succeeded Marvell he seems to have been best known as a political satirist; and the number of pieces ascribed to him in *Poems on State Affairs* and similar collections is evidence of his celebrity. But his satires, like the pamphlets, are essentially of temporary interest, and are mainly of historical value. They are full of allusions unintelligible without a commentary, and so personal that they frequently become mere lampoons. The vice he attacks loses none of its grossness in the verses. Moreover, his lines are hasty and rough-hewn, and in employing the heroic couplet Marvell is never completely master of his instrument. Yet despite these defects there is much both in his satires and pamphlets which still amuses; a gift of humorous exaggeration which suggests Sydney Smith, and an irony which occasionally recalls Swift.

C. H. Firth, 1893, *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. XXXVI, p. 330

In the style of Marvell's prose, as in the style of his satiric couplets, there are the marks of hesitation between two different manners. He is sometimes clear, quick, and succinct, sometimes he falls back into the heavier manner of the older writers. His vocabulary is various. His practice on "Bayes" involved a good deal of slang; his satiric medley is dashed with a number of spices from different languages, even from the Malay. He uses, without distress, the heavier Latin armoury.

W. P. Ker, 1894, *English Prose*, ed. Craik, vol. III, p. 34

One of the most original poets of the Stuart period, the new tentative features of the age in poetry, again, are clearly marked. The lyrical work belonging to his early life has often passages of imaginative quality, equally strong and delicate. If we exclude Milton, no one of that time touches sweeter or nobler lyrical notes; but he is singularly unequal; he flies high, but is not long on the wing. The characteristic Elizabethan smoothness of unbroken melody was now failing; the fanciful style of Donne, the seventeenth century *concetti*, seized on Marvell too strongly, and replaced in him the earlier mythological landscape characteristic of the Renaissance.

Francis Turner Palgrave, 1896, *Landscape in Poetry*, p. 154

THOMAS HOBBES
1588-1679

Born, at Westport, Wilts, 5 April 1588. At school at Westport, 1592-96; thence to Malmesbury, 1596, and afterwards at another school at Westport. To Magdalen Hall, Oxford, 1603; B. A., 5 Feb. 1608. Tutor and

secretary to William Cavendish, son of first Earl of Devonshire, 1608-28; travelled abroad with him, 1610. Travelling tutor to son of Sir Gervase Clifton, 1629-31. Tutor to third Earl of Devonshire, 1631-40. Travelled abroad with him, 1634-37. Fled to Paris at meeting of Long Parliament, Nov. 1640. Remained there till 1651, when he retreated to England in consequence of complications caused by publication of *Leviathan*. Resumed post of secretary to Earl of Devonshire, 1663. Pension of £100 from Charles II. at Restoration. Lived in London till 1675; remainder of life spent at country seats of Earl of Devonshire. Died, at Hardwick, Derbyshire, 4 Dec. 1679. Buried in Hault Hucknall Church. WORKS: *De Mirabilibus Pecci* [1636?]; *Elementorum Philosophiæ sectio tertia de Cive* (under initials: T. H.), 1642; *Tractatus Opticus* (in Mersenne's *Cogitata Physico-Mathematica*), 1644; *Humane Nature*, 1650; *De Corpore Politico*, 1650; *Epistle to Davenant*, 1651; *Leviathan*, 1651; *Of Liberty and Necessity*, 1654; *Elementorum Philosophiæ sectio prima de Corpore*, 1655; *A Briefe of the Art of Rhetorique* (anon.), [1655?]; *Questions concerning Liberty, Necessity and Chance*, 1656; Στιγμαι 'Αγεωμετριας 1657; *Elementorum Philosophiæ sectio secunda de Homine*, 1658; *Examinatio et Emendatio Mathematicæ Hodiernæ*, 1660; *Dialogus Physicus*, 1661; *Problemata Physica*, 1662; *Mr. Hobbes considered*, 1662; *De Principiis et Ratiocinatione Geometrarum*, 1666; *Quadratura Circuli*, 1669; *Rosetum Geometricum*, 1671; Three Papers presented to the Royal Society attacking Dr. Wallis, 1671; *Lux Mathematica* (under initials: R. R.), 1672; *Principa et Problemata aliquot Geometrica* (under initials: T. H.), 1674; *Decameron Physiologicum*, 1678; *Behemoth* (written, and suppressed, 1668), privately published, 1679; publicly (under initials: T. H.), 1680; *Vita, authore seipso*, 1679. POSTHUMOUS: *An Historical Narration concerning Heresie*, 1680; *T. H. Malmesb. Vita* (in *Vitæ Hobbianæ Auctarium*), 1681; *Dialogue between a Philosopher and a Student of the Common Law*, 1681; *An Answer to . . . The Catching of the Levathian*, 1682; *Hobbes's Tripos*, 1684; *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 1688. He *translated: Thucydides*, 1629; Homer's *Iliad and Odyssey*, 1675. COLLECTED WORKS: *Opera Philosophica*, 1668; *Moral and Political Works*, ed. by J. Campbell, 1750; Complete Works, ed. by Sir W. Molesworth (11 vols.), 1839-45. *Life:* by G. C. Robertson, 1886.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors*, p. 133

SEE: C. D. Thorpe; *The Aesthetic Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, 1940; John Bowle, *Hobbes and His Critics*, 1951.

PERSONAL

In his youth unhealthy; of an ill yellowish complexion: wett in his feet, and trod both his shoes the same way. . . . From forty, or better, he grew healthier, and then he had a fresh, ruddy, complexion. He was *sanguineomelancholicus;* which the physiologers say is the most ingeniose complexion. He would say that "There might be good witts of all complexions; but goodnatured, impossible." *Head.* In his old age he was very bald (which claymed

a veneration); yet within dore, he used to study, and sitt, bareheaded, and sayd he never tooke cold in his head, but that the greatest trouble was to keepe-off the flies from pitching on the baldness. . . . His skin was soft and of that kind which my Lord Chancellor Bacon in his *History of Life and Death* calles a goose-skin, i.e. of a wide texture. . . . *Face* not very great; ample forehead; whiskers yellowish-reddish, which naturally turned up—which is a signe of a brisque witt. . . . He had a good eie, and that of a hazell colour, which was full of life and spirit, even to the last. When he was earnest in discourse, there shone (as it were) a bright live-coale within it. He had two kind of looks:—when he laugh't, was witty, and in a merry humour, one could scarce see his eies; by and by, when he was serious and positive, he open'd his eies round. . . . He was six foote high, and something better (quaere James [Wheldon]), and went indifferently erect, or rather, considering his great age, very erect.

John Aubrey, 1669-96, *Brief Lives*, ed. Clark, vol. I, pp. 347, 348, 349

Hobbs seems not to have been very amiable in his life; he was certainly incapable of true friendship, for the same cowardice, or false principle, which could instigate him to abandon truth, would likewise teach him to sacrifice his friend to his own safety. When young, he was voluptuous, when old, peevish, destitute alike of resolution and honour. However high his powers, his character is mean, he flattered the prevailing follies, he gave up virtue to fashion, and if he can be produced as a miracle of learning, he can never be ranked with those venerable names, who have added virtue to erudition, and honour to genius; who have illuminated the world by their knowledge, and reformed it by example.

Theophilus Cibber, 1753, *Lives of the Poets*, vol. II, p. 215

His greatest imperfection was a monstrous egotism—the fate of those who concentrate all their observations in their own individual feelings. There are minds which may think too much, by conversing too little with books and men. Hobbes exulted he had read little; he had not more than half-a-dozen books about him; hence he always saw things in his own way, and doubtless this was the cause of his mania for disputation. . . . His little qualities were the errors of his own selfish philosophy; his great ones were those of nature. He was a votary to his studies: he avoided marriage, to which he was inclined; and refused place and wealth, which he might have enjoyed, for literary leisure. He treated with philosophic pleasantry his real contempt of money. His health and his studies were the sole objects of his thoughts; and notwithstanding that panic which so often disturbed them, he wrote and

published beyond his ninetieth year. He closes the metrical history of his life with more dignity than he did his life itself; for his mind seems always to have been greater than his actions.

Isaac Disraeli, 1812-13, "Hobbes," *Quarrels of Authors*

The infinite complexity of human life is stretched on the Procrustean bed of simplicity, and truth is thereby sacrificed to system. Beginning from inadequate premises, unable or unwilling to credit human nature with social as well as with self-regarding instincts, he is forced by the very self-consistency of his logical intellect into conclusions that prove to be irreconcilable with the facts of a more universal experience. In these repects Hobbes resembles Bentham, as in his cynical pessimism he resembles La Rochefoucauld. His genius and tone of feeling have been compared with Swift, but there appears to us to be more point in the contrast than in the comparison, for Swift's temperament was passionate, and his blood red-hot, while Hobbes is always phlegmatic and cold. The one despises, the other hates. Hobbes' adversaries are cut asunder as with a steel edge, Swift's are burnt up as with a consuming fire. Nowhere in the former's life do we come across a Stella or a Vanessa, nor, even if all Hobbes' private papers had come down to us, should we have been likely to discover such an entry as this of Swift's: "Only a woman's hair." It would be difficult to quote any trait from his biographies more characteristic of him than his selection of his own monumental inscription: "This is the true philosopher's stone."

H. W. Hoare, 1884, "Thomas Hobbes," *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 42, p. 236

Leviathan (1651)

To my booksellers for "Hobb's Leviathan," which is now mightily called for; and what was heretofore sold for 8s., I now give 24s. at the second hand, and is sold for 30s., it being a book the bishops will not let be printed again.

Samuel Pepys, 1668, *Diary, Sept. 3rd*

The manner of writing which booke (he told me) was thus. He walked much and contemplated, and he had in the head of his staffe a pen and inke-horne, carried alwayes a note-booke in his pocket, and as soon as a thought darted, he presently entred it into his booke, or otherwise he might perhaps have lost it. He had drawne the designe of the booke into chapters, etc., so he knew whereabout it would come in.

John Aubrey, 1669-96, *Brief Lives*, ed. Clark, vol. I, p. 334

Few books have occasioned more or fiercer controversy than this production of the philosopher of Malmsbury. It is an able, learned, but most paradoxical and irreligious performance. Its principles would justify all social disorder and all impiety. But the scales of the Leviathan are very hard to penetrate, and have injured most of the weapons which have been tried upon it. Lord Clarendon *"surveyed"* it, and Bishop Bramhall endeavoured to *"catch"* it; but the monster still lived, exercising the ingenuity and courage of many a successive combatant. The most formidable of his antagonists were—Cumberland, in his work, *De Legibus Naturæ,* and Cudworth, in the *Intellectual System.*

William Orme, 1830, *The Life and Times of Richard Baxter,* p. 704., note

One corner of his library was filled with a strange company of antiquated books of orthodox type; this he called "the condemned cell." When looking at the "strange bedfellows" that slept on the shelves, the writer asked [Thomas Henry] Huxley what author had most influenced a style whose clearness and vigour, nevertheless, seems unborrowed; and he at once named the masculine and pellucid *Leviathan* of Hobbes.

Edward Clodd, 1897, *Pioneers of Evolution,* p. 241

Poetry

Hobbes could construe a Greek author; but his skill in words must have been all derived from the dictionary: for he seems not to have known, that any one articulate sound could be more agreeable, or any one phrase more dignified, than any other. In his *Iliad* and *Odyssey,* even when he hits the author's sense (which is not always the case), he proves, by his choice of words, that of harmony, elegance, or energy of style, he had no manner of conception. And hence that work, though called a Translation of Homer, does not even deserve the name of *poem;* because it is in every respect *unpleasing,* being nothing more than a fictitious narrative delivered in mean prose, with the additional meanness of harsh rhyme and untuneable measure.

James Beattie, 1776-9, *Essays on Poetry and Music,* p. 239

Hobbes's clearness and aptness of expression, the effect of which is like that of reading a book with a good light, never forsake him—not even in that most singular performance, his version of Homer, where there is scarcely a trace of ability of any other kind. There are said to be only two lines in that work in which he is positively poetical. . . . For the most part, indeed, Hobbes's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are no better than travesties of Homer's,

the more ludicrous as being undesigned and unconscious. Never was there a more signal revenge than that which Hobbes afforded to imagination and poetry over his own unbelieving and scoffing philsophism by the publication of this work. It was almost as if the man born blind, who had all his lifetime been attempting to prove that the sense which he himself wanted was no sense at all, and that that thing, color, which it professed peculiarly to discern, was a mere delusion, should have himself at last taken the painter's brush and pallet in hand, and attempted, in confirmation of his theory, to produce a picture by the mere senses of touch, taste, smell, and hearing.

George L. Craik, 1861, *A Compendious History of English Literature and of the English Language,* vol. II, pp. 123, 124

His verse is a mere curiosity, though a considerable curiosity. The chief of it (the translation of Homer written in the quartrain, which his friend Davenant's *Gondibert* had made popular) is completely lacking in poetical quality, of which, perhaps, no man ever had less than Hobbes; and it is written on a bad model. But it has so much of the nervous bull-dog strength which, in literature if not in life, was Hobbes's main characteristic, that it is sometimes both a truer and a better representative of the original than some very mellifluous and elegant renderings.

George Saintsbury, 1887, *History of Elizabethan Literature,* p. 350

General

He thought interest and fear were the chief principles of society; and he put all morality in the following that which was our own private will or advantage. He thought religion had no other foundation than the laws of the land. And he put all the law in the will of the prince, or of the people: for he writ his book at first in favour of absolute monarchy, but turned it afterwards to gratify the republican party. These were his true principles, though he had disguised them for deceiving unwary readers. And this set of notions came to spread much. The novelty and boldness of them set many on reading them. The impiety of them was acceptable to men of corrupt minds, which were but too much prepared to receive them by the extravagances of the late times.

Gilbert Burnet, 1715-34, *History of My Own Times,* vol. I

No English author in that age was more celebrated both abroad and at home than Hobbes; in our time he is much neglected: a lively instance how precarious all reputations founded on reasoning and philosophy! . . . Hobbes's

politics are fitted only to promote tyranny, and his ethics to encourage licentiousness. Though an enemy to religion he partakes nothing of the spirit of scepticism; but is as positive and dogmatical as if human reason, and his reason in particular, could attain a thorough conviction in these subjects. Clearness and propriety of style are the chief excellencies of Hobbes's writings.

David Hume, 1762, *The History of England, The Commonwealth*

His style is incomparably better than that of any other writer in the reign of Charles I and was, for its uncommon strength and purity, scarcely equalled in the succeeding reign. He has, in translation, done Thucydides as much justice as he has done injury to Homer: but he looked upon himself as born for much greater things than treading in the footsteps of his predecessors. He was for striking out new paths in science, government, and religion; and for removing the landmarks of former ages. His ethics have a strong tendency to corrupt our morals, and his politics to destroy that liberty which is the birthright of every human creature. He is commonly represented as a sceptic in religion, and a dogmatist in philosophy; but he was a dogmatist in both. The main principles of his *Leviathan* are as little founded in moral or evangelical truth, as the rules he laid down for squaring the circle are in mathematical demonstration. His book on human nature is esteemed the best of his works.

James Granger, 1769-1824, *Biographical History of England*, vol. V, p. 290

All ornament, all emotions, are excluded from the style of Hobbes; it is a mere aggregate of arguments and concise facts, united together by deduction, as by iron bands. There are no tints, no fine or unusual word. He makes use only of words most familiar to common and lasting usage; there are not a dozen employed by him which, during two hundred years, have grown obsolete; he pierces to the root of all sensation, removes the transient and brilliant externals, compresses the solid portion which is the permanent subject-matter of all thought, and the proper object of common intelligence. He curtails throughout in order to strengthen; he attains solidity by expression. Of all the bonds which connect ideas, he retains but one, and that the most stable; his style is only a continuous chain of the most stubborn description, wholly made up of additions and subtractions, reduced to a combination of certain simple processes, which, added on to or diminishing from one another, make up, under various names, the totals or differences, for which we are for ever either studying the formation or unravelling the elements.

H. A. Taine, 1871, *History of English Literature*, tr. Van Laun, vol. I, bk. iii, ch. i, p. 472

Hobbes had, in early life, been Bacon's secretary, but, though he wrote a work expressly on "Computation or Logic," there is no mention in it of Induction, of the Baconian method, or of Bacon himself. It is, perhaps, still more singular that there is no mention of Bacon in the Epistle Dedicatory to the *Elements of Philosophy,* where he refers to Galileo, Kepler, Harvey, Gassendi, Mersenne, &c. Bacon's name, in fact, so far as I am aware, occurs only twice in the whole of Hobbes' works, and there without any epithet of praise or blame. From the extent of Hobbes' writings and the intimate personal relations which had formerly existed between him and Bacon, I can hardly refer this silence to mere accident. It may have been due to some personal pique, or the abstract character of Hobbes' mind may have rebelled against the concrete and inductive spirit of Bacon's philosophy. For, it may be noticed that there are few writers on moral and political questions, in whose works the historical spirit is more conspicuously absent than in Hobbes.

Thomas Fowler, 1881, *Bacon (English Philosophers),* p. 194

Hobbes produced a fermentation in English thought not surpassed until the advent of Darwinism. While, however, the opponents of Hobbes were countless, his biographer could discover only a single supporter. "Hobbism" was an occasional name of reproach until the middle of the eighteenth century (he is mentioned on the title-page of *Deism Revealed,* 1751), although his philosophy had long been eclipsed by Locke's *Essay.* He is one of Kortholt's "three imposters" (1680) along with Spinoza and Herbert of Cherbury. In Farquhar's *Constant Couple,* 1699, the hypocritical debauchee carries Hobbes in his pocket; and among *Twelve Ingenious Characters,* 1686, is a dissolute town-fop who takes about "two leaves of Leviathan." . . . Atterbury holds him up as a warning in a sermon "on the terrors of conscience." . . . He was reviled on all sides as the typical atheist, materialist, political absolutist, and preacher of ethical selfishness. Hobbes was in truth a product of the great intellectual movement distinguished by such names as Bacon (1561-1629), Galileo (1564-1642), Kepler (1571-1630), Harvey (1578-1657) and Descartes (1596-1650).

Leslie Stephen, 1891, *Dictionary of National Biography,* vol. XXVII, p. 42

SAMUEL BUTLER
1613-1680

Samuel Butler, grievously miscalled "the Hogarth of Poetry," seems to have been mainly a self-taught man. After leaving Worcester Cathedral School he started in life as justice's clerk to a Mr. Jeffries, at Earl's

Croome. He was next at Wrest in Bedfordshire, in the service of the Countess of Kent, and here he met and worked for John Selden. Finally he formed part of the household of Sir Samuel Luke, a Presbyterian Colonel, "scout-master for Bedfordshire and governor of Newport Pagnell." At the Restoration he was made Secretary to the President of Wales and steward of Ludlow Castle, and in 1662, at full fifty years old, he published the first part of the immense lampoon whose authorship has given him his place in English letters. The second part of *Hudibras* was issued in 1663; the third in 1678. Two years afterwards Butler died. . . . During his lifetime Butler published but the three parts of *Hudibras*, a couple of pamphlets, and an ode on the exploits and renown of the illustrious Claude Duval, which last, in its grave extravagance of irony, is, by anticipation, not unsuggestive of Fielding's *Jonathan Wild*. Three volumes of *Remains*, mostly spurious, were published in 1715; but in 1759 Thyer of Manchester put forth a couple of volumes of prose and verse selected from Butler's manuscripts, and these, with some scraps printed later on, are all that is known to exist of him.

William Ernest Henley, 1880, *English Poets*, ed. Ward, vol. II, pp. 396, 397

SEE: *Collected Works*, ed. A. R. Waller and René Lamar, 1905-28, 3v.; Edward A. Richards, *Hudibras in the Burlesque Tradition*, 1937.

PERSONAL

This little monument was erected in the year 1786, by some of the parishioners of Covent Garden, in memory of the celebrated Samuel Butler, who was buried in this church, A.D. 1680.

A few plain men, to pomp and state unknown,
O'er a poor bard have rais'd this humble stone,
Whose wants alone his genius could surpass,
Victim of zeal! the matchless Hudibras!
What though fair freedom suffer'd in his page,
Reader, forgive the author for the age!
How few, alas! disdain to cringe and cant,
When 'tis the mode to play the sycophant.
But, oh! let all be taught, from Butler's fate,
Who hope to make their fortunes by the great,
That wit and pride are always dangerous things,
And little faith is due to courts and kings.

Inscription on Monument, Saint Paul's Church, Covent Garden, 1786

This Samuel Butler, who was a boon and witty companion, especially among the company he knew well, died of a consumption, September 25th, 1680, and was, according to his desire, buried six foot deep in the yard belonging

to the Church of S. Paul in Covent-Garden within the liberty of Westminster, viz. at the west end of the said yard, on the north side, and under the wall, of the church; and under that wall which parts the yard from the common high-way.

Anthony Wood, 1691-1721, *Athenæ Oxonienses,* vol. II

Did not the celebrated author of *Hudibras* bring the King's enemies into lower contempt with the sharpness of his wit than all the terrors of his administration could reduce them to? Was not his book always in the pocket of the prince? And what did the mighty prowess of this knight-errant amount to? Why, he died, with the highest esteem of the court, in a garret.

Colley Cibber, 1719, *Ximenes, Dedication to Sir Richard Steele*

In this mist of obscurity passed the life of Butler, a man whose name can only perish with his language. The mode and place of his education are unknown; the events of his life are variously related; and all that can be told with certainty is, that he was poor.

Samuel Johnson, 1779, *Samuel Butler, Lives of the English Poets*

Hudibras (1663-78)

To St. Paul's Church Yard to my booksellers . . . choose . . . *Hudibras,* both parts, the book now in greatest fashion for drollery, though I cannot, I confess, see enough where the wit lies.

Samuel Pepys, 1663, *Diary,* Dec. 10

CHARLES R. Our will and pleasure is and we do hereby strictly charge and command, that no printer, bookseller, stationer, or other person whatsoever within our kingdom of England or Ireland, do print, reprint, utter or sell, or cause to be printed, reprinted, uttered or sold, a book or poem called *Hudibras,* or any part thereof, without the consent and approbation of Samuel Boteler, Esq. or his assignees, as they and every of them will answer the contrary at their perils. Given at our Court at Whitehall, the tenth day of September, in the year of our Lord God 1677, and in the 29th year of our reign. By his Majesty's command.

Jo. Berkenhead, 1677, *Miscellaneous Papers, Mus. Brit. Bibl. Birch,* No. 4293

The worth of his poem is too well known to need my commendation, and he is above my censure. His satire is of the Varronian kind, though unmixed

with prose. The choice of his numbers is suitable enough to his design, as he has managed it; but in any other hand, the shortness of his verse, and the quick returns of rhyme, had debased the dignity of style.

John Dryden, 1692, *Essay on Satire, Works,* ed. Scott and Saintsbury, vol. xiii

If *Hudibras* had been set out with as much wit and humour in heroic verse as he is in doggerel he would have made a much more agreeable figure than he does; though the generality of his readers are so wonderfully pleased with the double rhymes, that I do not expect many will be of my opinion in this particular.

Joseph Addison, 1711, *The Spectator,* Dec. 15

Butler set out on too narrow a plan, and even that design is not kept up. He sinks into little true particulars about the Widow, &c.—The enthusiastic Knight, and the ignorant Squire, over-religious in two different ways, and always quarrelling together, is the chief point of view in it.

Alexander Pope, 1737-39, *Spence's Anecdotes,* ed. Singer, p. 157

Burlesque may perhaps be divided into such as turns chiefly on the thought and such as depends more on the expression, or we may add a third kind, consisting in thoughts ridiculously dressed, in language much above or below their dignity. *The Splendid Shilling* of Phillips, and the *Hudibras* of Butler are the most obvious instances. Butler, however, depended much on the ludicrous effect of his double rhymes; in other respects, to declare your sentiments, he is rather a witty writer, than a humorous one.

William Shenstone, 1763? *Works,* 3rd ed., vol. II, p. 182

Butler stands without a rival in burlesque poetry. His *Hudibras* is, in its kind, almost as great an effort of genius as *Paradise Lost* itself. It abounds with uncommon learning, new rhymes, and original thoughts. Its images are truly and naturally ridiculous: we are never shocked with excessive distortion nor grimace; nor is human nature degraded to that of monkeys and yahoos. There are in it many strokes of temporary satire, and some characters and allusions which cannot be discovered at this distance of time.

James Granger, 1769-1824, *Biographical History of England,* vol. v, p. 243

Concerning *Hudibras* there is but one sentiment—it is universally allowed to be the first and last poem of its kind; the learning, wit, and humour, certainly stand unrivalled: various have been the attempts to describe and

define the two last. . . . If any one wishes to know what wit and humour are, let him read *Hudibras* with attention; he will there see them displayed in the brightest colours: there is lustre resulting from the quick elucidation of an object by a just and unexpected arrangement of it with another subject: propriety of words, and thoughts elegantly adapted to the occasion: objects which possess an affinity and congruity, or sometimes a contrast to each other, assembled with quickness and variety; in short, every ingredient of wit, or of humour, which critics have discovered on dissecting them, may be found in this poem.

Treadway Russel Nash, 1793, ed. *Hudibras,* Preface

The perpetual scintillation of Butler's wit is too dazzling to be delightful; and we can seldom read far in *Hudibras* without feeling more fatigue than pleasure. His fancy is employed with the profusion of a spendthrift, by whose eternal round of banqueting his guests are at length rather wearied out than regaled.

Sir Walter Scott, 1805, *The Life of John Dryden*

The *Hudibras* of Butler, like the fabled Arabian bird, is in itself a species: it had no precursor, and its imitators are forgotten. With all the disadvantages of a temporary subject, obsolete characters, and "a conclusion in which nothing is concluded," it continues to be the delight of the few, and the text-book of the many: its couplets have passed into proverbs—the names of its heroes are "familiar in our mouths as household words." With the exception of Shakespeare, there is, perhaps, no author whose expressions are so inextricably intertwined with our everyday discourse, and whose writings afford such an inexhaustible variety of apothegms of universal and apposite application; yet there is no author, enjoying any considerable share of popularity, who is so imperfectly understood and appreciated.

H. Baldwin, 1820, "Butler's Genuine and Spurious Remains," *Retrospective Review,* vol. II, p. 256

The defect of Butler's poem undoubtedly consists in . . . the poverty of the incidents, and the incompleteness and irregularity of the design. The slender strain of narrative which is just visible in the commencement, soon dwindles away and is lost. It is true that the poem abounds with curious and uncommon learning, with original thoughts, happy images, quaint and comic turns of expression, and new and fanciful rhymes. But the humour, instead of being diffused quietly and unostentatiously over the whole poem, in rich harmonious colouring, is collected into short epigrammatic sentences, pointed apothegms, and unexpected allusions. It has the same merits and defects as a poem of a very different kind—Young's *Night Thoughts,*—

copious invention, new and pleasing images, and brilliant thoughts; with a want of sufficient connexion in the subject, and progress in the story.

John Mitford, 1935, ed. *Hudibras, Life of Butler*

His reading and illustration are all out of the way; and his manner, dry and crabbed at one time, flowing and free and popular at another. I should call him, therefore, a humorist, not only in the literary sense, but in the sense in which we apply the word to one who has some strong peculiarity of character, which he indulges, in whims, in oddities, in comic extravagances, according to the bent of his inclination. There is a kind of likeness between Butler and old Burton of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. Both men had various and unusual reading; both were at once comic and grave; and both, amidst wild and homely pleasantry, shoot out flashes of thought and fancy which are equal to the efforts of anybody. . . . Among humorous writers he must always occupy a very high place. He is a thinker, old Butler, as you see through all his odd comic poem; while as a man of wit, it would be perhaps impossible to name one in whom wit is so absolutely redundant.

James Hannay, 1854, *Satire and Satirists,* pp. 114, 115

It is rather curious to remember that the two best burlesque poems in the English language, *Hudibras* and *Don Juan,* are both fragments; and that, in reference to the first of these, at least, we have not the most distant data to guide us in conjecturing what was the ultimate plan or purpose of the poet, beyond, at least, the very probable conjecture that his vigorous and unsparing satire would have swept at least into the ranks of the ungrateful cavaliers. As it is, *Hudibras* now stands before us—not a sublime, unfinished temple consecrated to deities, whose worship was never to be celebrated therein—but a great, grotesque, nameless structure, reared half in sport and half in earnest, which excites in the mind of those who walk in it rather laughter than love, rather wonder than satisfaction, and which, after all the explanations given is far more a problem than a poem.

George Gilfillan, 1854, ed., *Poetical Works of Samuel Butler, Life,* p. xxv

Although the merits of *Hudibras* have, in our opinion, been exaggerated, because largely taken on trust, yet no one can question the power and merit of the poem. It is a rough, strong, grotesque satire, full of point and force, and did more to put the defects of Puritanism in a ridiculous and glaring light and give popular currency to their faults, real and supposed, than anything which has ever been written. The terse and stinging sentences of the mock epic were in every one's mouth; but their author lived and died

a neglected and morose man, bequeathing a volume of posthumous papers, full of bitter flings against mankind.

Henry Cabot Lodge, 1880, "Masson's Life of Milton," *International Review*, vol. 9, p. 129

Every good cause has its Hudibras. Butler wrote, no doubt, as a partisan, but his whole war was against hypocrisy. Against that in every form he waged his war, though putting into the central place what he regarded as the worst hypocrisy of all. But he aimed also his shafts of wit against false show of courage; pedantry of learning: the false conventions of love poetry; the worldiness of love; pretensions of false science; delusive aids of law. Had he completed the book, he would have left few of the shams of life untouched. To the weak side of Law and Divinity he would, no doubt, have added the weak side of Physic, when time came for summoning the Doctor to despatch his knight. An attentive reader of *Hudibras* will not be more impressed by its wit, than by the breadth of its plan.

Henry Morley, 1885, ed. *Hudibras* (Universal Library), p. viii

General

Butler was suffered to die in a garret, Otway in an alehouse, Nat Lee in the street. And yet Butler was a whole species of poets in one; admirable in a manner in which no one else has been tolerable; a manner which began and ended in him, in which he knew no guide and has found no followers.

John Dennis, 1717, *Remarks on Pope's Homer*, p. 6

There was something singular in this same Butler. Besides an infinite deal of wit, he had great sense and penetration, both in the sciences and the world. Yet with all this, he could never plan a work, nor tell a story well. The first appears from his *Hudibras,* the other from his *Elephant in the Moon*. He evidently appears to have been dissatisfied with it, by turning it into *long* verse: from whence, you perceive, he thought the fault lay in the doggerel verse, but that was his *forte;* the fault lay in the *manner of telling*. . . . Butler's heroics are poor stuff; indeed only doggerel, made languid by heavy expletives. This attempt in the change of his measure was the sillier, not only as he had acquired a mastery in the short measure, but as that measure, somehow or other, suits best with his sort of wit. His characters are full of cold puerilities, though intermixed with abundance of wit, and with a great deal of good sense. He is sometimes wonderfully fine both in his sentiment and expression.

William Warburton, 1759, *Letters from a Late Eminent Prelate,* July 8, p. 287

Taking them in this order, we will commence with a short notice of the miscellaneous verse. (I) We see Butler here, as in all his writings, a disappointed man, whose hand was raised against every man. He had a keen eye for the ridiculous side of things, but he did not care to draw attention to the better side. This may be said of all satirists, but it is a specially marked characteristic of Butler. One would have thought that there was enough folly on all sides of him to occupy his pen, and it is to be regretted that the new-born love for science and antiquity, which distinguished the Restoration era, should have had so persistent an enemy in this man of genius.

Henry B. Wheatley, 1881, "Butler's Unpublished Remains,"
The Antiquary, vol. IV, p. 252

SIR THOMAS BROWNE
1605-1682

Born, in London, 19 Oct. 1605. Educated at Winchester Coll., as Scholar, 1616-23. To Broadgate Hall (now Pembroke Coll.), Oxford, 1623; B. A., 31 June 1626; M. A., 11 June 1629. Practised medicine for a short time. Tour in Ireland, France, Italy, Holland. Returned to practice near Halifax, *Religio Medici* probably written 1635. To Norwich, 1637. M. D., Oxford, 10 July 1637. Married Dorothy Mileham, 1641. *Religio Medici* privately published, 1642. Sided with Royalists in Civil Wars. Hon. Fellow of Coll. of Physicians, 6 July 1665. Knighted, on State visit of Charles II to Norwich, 28 Sept. 1671. Died, 19 Oct. 1682; buried at Norwich. WORKS. *Religio Medici,* privately printed, 1642; authorized version, 1643; *Pseudodoxia Epidemica,* 1646; *Hydriotaphia,* 1658. POSTHUMOUS. *Certain Miscellany Tracts,* 1684; *Works,* 1686; *Posthumous Works,* 1712; *Christian Morals,* 1716. COLLECTED WORKS: including LIFE: and Correspondence, ed. by S. Wilkin (4 vols.), 1835-36.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 33

SEE: *Works,* ed. Geoffrey Keynes, 1928-31, 6v.; William P. Dunn, *Browne: A Study in Religious Philosophy,* 1926, rev. 1950; Joan Bennett, *Sir Thomas Browne: "A Man of Achievement in Literature,"* 1962.

PERSONAL

For a character of his person, his complexion and hair was answerable to his name, his stature was moderate, and habit of body neither fat nor lean but *evoápkoc*. In his habit of clothing, he had an aversion to all finery, and affected plainness, both in the fashion and ornaments. He ever wore a cloke, or boots, when few others did. He kept himself always very warm, and thought it most safe so to do, though he never loaded himself with such

a multitude of garments, as Suctonius reports of Augustus, enough to clothe a good family. . . . His memory, though not so eminent as that of Seneca or Scaliger, was capacious and tenacious, insomuch as he remembered all that was remarkable in any book that he had read; and not only knew all persons again that he had ever seen at any distance of time, but remembered the circumstances of their bodies, and their particular discourses and speeches. . . . He was never seen to be transported with mirth, or dejected with sadness; always cheerful, but rarely merry, at any sensible rate, seldom heard to break a jest; and when he did, he would be apt to blush at the levity of it: his gravity was natural without affectation. His modesty was visible in a natural habitual blush, which was increased upon the least occasion, and oft discovered without any observable cause. They that knew no more of him than by the briskness of his writings, found themselves deceived in their expectation when they came in his company, noting the gravity and sobriety of his aspect and conversation; so free from loquacity, or much talkativeness, that he was something difficult to be engaged in any discourse; though when he was so, it was always singular and never trite or vulgar. . . . Sir Thomas understood most of the European languages, viz. all that are in Hutter's bible, which he made use of. The Latin and Greek he understood critically.

Rev. John Whitefoot, 1699, *Minutes of a Life of Sir Thomas Browne*

It is very remarkable, that although Sir Thomas Browne had forty children and grand-children (including those who were so by marriage), yet, in the second generation, within thirty years after his decease, the male line became extinct; and of the third generation, none survived their infancy, excepting in the family of his eldest daughter, Anne; of whose eight children, none left any descendants but the third daughter, Frances Fairfax, married to the Earl of Buchan; whose daughter, Lady Frances Erskine, married the celebrated Colonel Gardener, killed at Preston-pans in 1745;—whose grandson was the late Lord Erskine, one of the most splendid ornaments of the English bar, created Lord Chancellor in 1806; and from whom are thus lineally descended Henry David, the present and 12th Earl of Buchan, and David Montagu, the present and 2nd Lord Erskine of Restormel Castle.

Simon Wilkin, 1836, ed., *The Works of Sir Thomas Browne, Memoir*

Of a mild and kindly temperament, fond of his books and his curiosities, and spinning out his subtle and aerial thoughts from materials which the crowded world casts out of its bustling way into nooks and corners—moderate as a politician, averse to all disputes in theology, inclined in both to leave things in their beaten course, beneath the shelter of unexamining

veneration—there did not exist for Sir Thomas Browne those great and exciting interests which gird up the loins of a man's mind, and make him in earnest in all that he undertakes.

Lord Edward George Lytton Bulwer-Lytton, 1836,
"Sir Thomas Browne," *Edinburgh Review*

Religio Medici (1642)

But to come back to our Physician; truly, my lord, I must needs pay him, as a due, the acknowledging his pious discourses to be excellent and pathetical ones, containing worthy motives to incite one to virtue, and to deter one from vice; thereby to gain heaven, and to avoid hell. Assuredly he is the owner of a solid head, and of a strong, generous heart.

Sir Kenelm Digby, 1642, *Letter to the Earl of Dorset*

The book entitled *Religio Medici* is in high credit here. The author has wit; there are abundance of fine things in that book; he is a humorist, whose thoughts are very agreeable, but who, in my opinion, is to seek for a master in religion—as many others are—and, in the end, perhaps, may find none. One may say of him, as Philip de Comines did the founder of the Minimes, a hermit of Calabria, Francis de Paula, "he is still alive, and may grow worse as well as better."

Guy Patin, 1645, *Letter,* from Paris, April 7

It is not their intrinsic merit that keeps *Religio Medici* and *Urn-Burial* alive; it is because they were written by Sir Thomas Browne. The perennial charm of his quaint and engaging personality is impressed upon every line. Hence their vitality.

Sir John Skelton, 1895, "Mainly about The Story-Tellers,"
Table-Talk of Shirley, p. 262

Sir Thomas Browne directed a free play of mind upon the old dogmas, and the result was the *Religio Medici,* a work which each generation treasures and rereads, not because of the dogma, but because of the literature; it is a rare specimen of vital, flexible, imaginative writing.

John Burroughs, 1897, "On the Re-reading of Books,"
The Century, vol. LV, p. 150

Hydriotaphia (1658)

There is, perhaps, none of his works which better exemplifies his reading or memory. It is scarcely to be imagined, how many particulars he has amassed

together in a treatise which seems to have been occasionally written; and for which, therefore, no materials could have been previously collected.

Samuel Johnson, 1756, *Life of Sir Thomas Browne*

The slight vacuum in the left-hand case—two shelves from the ceiling—scarcely distinguishable but by the quick eye of a loser—was whilom the comodious resting-place of Brown on *Urn Burial*. C. will hardly allege that he knows more about that treatise than I do, who introduced it to him, and was indeed the first (of the moderns) to discover its beauties—but so have I known a foolish lover to praise his mistress in the presence of a rival more qualified to carry her off than himself.

Charles Lamb, 1820, *The Two Races of Men*

General

The true classical style of Hooker and his fellows was easily open to corruption; and Sir Thomas Browne it was, who, though a writer of great genius, first effectually injured the literary taste of the nation by his introduction of learned words, merely because they were learned. It would be difficult to describe Browne adequately; exuberant in conception and conceit, dignified, hyper-latinistic, a quiet and sublime enthusiast; yet a fantast, a humourist, a brain with a twist; egotistic like Montaigne, yet with a feeling heart and an active curiosity, which, however, too often degenerates into a hunting after oddities. In his *Hydriotaphia* and, indeed, almost all his works, the entireness of his mental action is very observable; he metamorphoses every thing, be it what it may, into the subject under consideration. But Sir Thomas Browne with all his faults had a genuine idiom.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1818, "Style," *Miscellanies Æsthetic and Literary*, ed. Ashe, p. 179

Browne had not the passionate fervour of Milton; grave, solemn, meditative, without fire or freshness of sentiment, he would have shrunk from Milton's vituperative scorn, and could never have conceived the tender and graceful fancies of Milton's smaller poems. The prevailing characteristic of his style is tranquil elaboration. He abounds in carefully-constructed periods, intermixed with short pointed sentences that have a singularly Johnsonian sound, from the fulness of the rhythm. His sentence-structure is more "formed" than in any previous writer, perhaps more so than in any writer anterior to Johnson. His figures are original, ingenious and peculiarly apt; he does not err in excess of similitudes. Felicitous and complete expression, comparatively free from tautology, inspires a general feeling of vigour; and here and there we are carried away by flights of high and solemn elevation. The great

drawback for the modern reader is his excessive use of words coined from the Latin. Even Johnson condemns him on this score. His Latinised diction is all the more remarkable because he expressly condemns Latin quotations.

William Minto, 1872-80, *Manual of English Prose Literature*, p. 305

To most persons of mind sensitive as his, his chosen studies would have seemed full of melancholy, turning always, as they did, upon death and decay. It is well, perhaps, that life should be something of a "meditation upon death"; but to many, certainly, Browne's would have seemed too like a lifelong following of one's own funeral. A museum is seldom a cheerful place—oftenest induces the feeling that nothing could ever have been young; and to Browne the whole world is a museum; all the grace and beauty it has being of a somewhat mortified kind. Only, for him (poetic dream, or philosophic apprehension, it was this which never failed to evoke his wonderful genius for exquisitely impassioned speech) over all those ugly anatomical preparations, as though over miraculous saintly relics, there was the perpetual flicker of a surviving spiritual ardency, one day to reassert itself—stranger far than any fancied odylic gravelights!

Walter Pater, 1886, *Appreciations*, p. 137

ISAAC WALTON
1593-1683

Izaak Walton was born at Stafford in August 1593. He came early up to London, and took a shop in Cornhill. In 1617-18 he was made one of the Ironmonger's Company. In 1624 we find him a linen-draper in Fleet Street, near Chancery Lane, and in 1630 he bought a house in the latter thoroughfare. He possessed many noble and clerical friends, whose acquaintance he sedulously cultivated. To the *LXXX, Sermons* of Dr. Donne he prefixed in 1640 his *Life* of that worthy. His *Life of Sir Henry Wotton* appeared in the same year. During the Civil War he retired to Stafford. His *Complete Angler* made its first appearance in 1653. He published the *Life of Hooker* in 1662; the *Life of George Herbert* in 1670 in a first complete edition of the four *Lives;* the *Life of Sanderson* followed in 1678; and, possibly, a work called *Love and Truth* in 1680. He spent the close of his career in the house of his son-in-law, Prebendary Hawkins, in Winchester, where he died in his ninety-first year on the 15th day of December 1683, and was buried in Winchester Cathedral.

Henry Craik, 1893, ed., *English Prose*, vol. II, p. 338

SEE: *The Complete Angler and the Lives*, ed. A. W. Pollard, 1901; *The Compleat Walton*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, 1929; David Novarr, *The Making of Walton's Lives*, 1958.

PERSONAL

Here resteth the body of
MR. ISAAK WALTON,
Who dyed the 15th of Decr.
1683.
Alas! He's gone before,
Gone to return no more.
Our panting breasts aspire
After their aged sire,
Whose well-spent life did last
Full ninety years and past.
But now he hath begun
That which will ne'er be done,
Crowned with eternal bliss,
We wish our souls with his.
VOTIS MODESTIS SIC FLERUNT LIBERI!

Inscription on Monument, Cathedral of Winchester

Sweet and fresh
As the flower-skirted streams of Staffordshire,
Where, under aged trees, the southwest wind
Of soft June mornings fanned the thin, white hair
Of the sage fisher.

John Greenleaf Whittier, 1848, *The Bridal of Pennacook*

One of the most interesting memorials of Walton left us is the monogram "I W." and the date "1658" scratched by Walton himself on the mural table to Isaac Casaubon in the south transept of Westminster Abbey. Dean Stanley was very fond of pointing this out to his personal friends as he escorted them to the Poets' Corner; and it is the only desecration ever committed in the Abbey that he heartily forgave.

Laurence Hutton, 1885, *Literary Landmarks of London*, p. 315

Without ambition, save to be in the society of good men, he passed through turmoil, ever companioned by content. For him existence had its trials: he saw all that he held most sacred overthrown; laws broken up; his king publicly murdered; his friends outcasts; his worship proscribed; he himself suffered in property from the raid of the Kirk into England. He underwent many bereavements: child after child he lost, but content he did not lose, nor sweetness of heart, nor belief. He was one of those happy characters which are never found disassociated from unquestioning faith. Of old he

might have been the ancient religious Athenian in the opening of Plato's *Republic,* or Virgil's aged gardener. The happiness of such natures would be incomplete without religion, but only by such tranquil and blessed souls can religion be accepted with no doubt or scruple, no dread, and no misgiving.

Andrew Lang, 1896, ed., *The Compleat Angler,*
Introduction, p. xxxi

The Complete Angler (1653)

And I wish the Reader also to take notice, that in writing of it I have made myself a recreation of a recreation; and that it might prove so to him, and not read dull and tediously, I have in several places mixed, not any scurrility, but some innocent, harmless mirth, of which, if thou be severe, sour-complexioned man, then I here disallow thee to be a competent judge; for divines say, there are offences given, and offences not given but taken.

Izaak Walton, 1653, *The Compleat Angler,*
The Epistle to the Reader

Lays the stress of his arguments upon other men's observations, wherewith he stuffs his undigested octavo; so brings himself under the angler's censure and the common calamity of a plagiary, to be pitied (poor man) for his loss of time, in scribbling and transcribing other men's notions. . . . I remember in Stafford, I urged his own argument upon him, that pickerel weed of itself breeds pickerel (pike).

Richard Franck, 1658-94, *Northern Memoirs*

I have just been reading a book which I may be too partial to, as it was the delight of my childhood; but I will recommend it to you: it is Izaak Walton's *Complete Angler.* All the scientific part you may omit in reading. The dialogue is very simple, full of pastoral beauties, and will charm you.

Charles Lamb, 1796, *Letter to Coleridge;*
Letters, ed. Ainger, vol. I, p. 20

That well-known work has an extreme simplicity, and an extreme interest, arising out of its very simplicity. In the description of a fishing-tackle you perceive the piety and humanity of the author's mind. This is the best pastoral in the language, not excepting Pope's or Philips's. We doubt whether Sannazarius' *Piscatory Eclogues* are equal to the scenes described by Walton on the banks of the River Lea. He gives the feeling of the open air. We walk with him along the dusty road-side, or repose on the banks of the river under a shady tree, and, in watching for the finny prey, imbibe what he beautifully calls "the patience and simplicity of poor, honest fishermen."

We accompany them to their inn at night, and partake of their simple, but delicious fare, while Maud, the pretty milk-maid, at her mother's desire, sings the classical ditties of Sir Walter Raleigh. Good cheer is not neglected in this work, any more than in *John Buncle,* or any other history which sets a proper value on the good things of life. The prints in the *Complete Angler* give an additional reality and interest to the scenes it describes. While Tottenham Cross shall stand, and longer, thy work, amiable and happy old man, shall last.

William Hazlitt, 1817, *The Round Table*

Indeed the *Complete Angler,* whether considered as a treatise on the art of angling, or a beautiful pastoral, abounding in exquisite descriptions of rural scenery, in sentiments of the purest morality, and in unaffected love of the Creator and his works, has long been ranked among the most popular compositions in our language.

Sir N. Harris Nicolas, 1832-36-60, ed., *Walton's Complete Angler*

Unquestionably, "Old Izaak," as his followers delight to call him, has won the regard and reverence of many generations of anglers throughout the world, not so much because of the literary merit of his book, though that is great, as because of the influence of that rare, restful, humanizing spirit which so largely pervades it. It is for this that the *Complete Angler* occupies, and will, in all likelihood, continue to do so for many and many a day to come, a unique place among the best of our English literature. To all lovers of angling, at any rate, it will never cease to be a classic or to body forth the delightfully unalloyed personality of the writer. Of course, few learners have consulted the book for practical guidance.

Alexander Cargill, 1893, "Izaak Walton," *Scribner's Magazine,* vol. 14, p. 275

Walton's *Angler,* 1653, first edition. Rev. J. Brand (1807), £3, 3s. (fine copy). Hunter (1813), £7, 10s. Utterson (1852), £11, 15s. Beckford (1883), fine copy, in green morocco, £87—Bain. Gibson-Craig (1887), £195 (morocco). Gibson-Craig (1888), £23 (imperfect, sold with all faults). G. Wood (Sotheby, 1891), £310 (clean, in original sheepskin). Sotheby (December 1895), £415.

Henry B. Wheatley, 1898, *Prices of Books,* p. 247

Lives

He talked of Isaac Walton's *Lives,* which was one of his most favourite books. Dr. Donne's Life, he said, was the most perfect of them.

James Boswell, 1790, *Life of Dr. Samuel Johnson*

Izaac Walton, adorned with a guileless simplicity of manners, claims from every good man the tribute of applause. It was his ambition to commend to the reverence of posterity the merits of those excellent persons, whose comprehensive learning and exalted piety will ever endear them in our memories.

Thomas Zouch, 1796, *Some Account of the Life and Writings of Izaak Walton*

As a biographer, again, Walton was an innovator. The five short lives which he published, though pale by the side of such work in biography as the end of the eighteenth century introduced, are yet notable as among the earliest which aim at giving us a vivid portrait of the man, instead of a discreet and conventional testimonial. It is to Walton, too, that we owe the idea of illustrating and developing biography by means of correspondence. Without doubt his incorrigible optimism entered into his study of the character of his friends, and it is no part of his inexperience as a portrait-painter that he mixes his colours with so much rosewater. He saw his distinguished acquaintances in that light; he saw them pure, radiant, and stately beyond a mortal guise, and he could not be true to himself unless he gave them the superhuman graces at which we may now smile a little. We sometimes feel that the stiffness of the biographical portrait is irksome to him. But here, as elsewhere, the artist is true to himself.

Edmund Gosse, 1893, *English Prose*, ed. Craik, vol. II, p. 341

THOMAS OTWAY
1652-1685

Born, at Trotton, Sussex, 3 March 1652. Educated at Winchester College, till 1669. Matriculated, Christ Church, Oxford, 27 May 1669; left in 1672, without degree. To London; devoted himself to writing plays. Produced, at Dorset Gardens Theatre, *Alcibiades*, 1675; *Don Carlos*, 1676; *Titus and Berenice*, 1677; *The Cheats of Scapin*, 1677; *Friendship in Fashion*, 1678. Enlisted, to serve in army in Holland, 1678. Ensign in Duke of Monmouth's regiment, Feb. 1678; Lieutenant, Nov. 1678. Returned to England, 1679. Produced, at Dorset Gardens Theatre, *The Orphan*, Feb. 1680; *History and Fall of Caius Marius*, 1680; *The Souldier's Fortune*, 1681; *Venice Preserved*, Feb. 1682; *The Atheist*, 1684. Died, in London, April 1685. Buried in St. Clement Danes Churchyard. WORKS: *Alcibiades*, 1675; *Don Carlos*, 1676; *Titus and Berenice . . . With a farce called The Cheats of Scapin* (adapted from Racine and Molière), 1677; *Friendship in Fashion*, 1678; *The Orphan*, 1680; *History and Fall of Caius Marius*, 1680; *The Poet's Complaint of his Muse*, 1680; *The Souldier's Fortune*,

1681; *Venice Preserv'd,* 1682; *The Atheist,* 1684. POSTHUMOUS: *Windsor Castle,* 1685; *The History of the Triumvirates* (trans. from the French), 1686. COLLECTED WORKS: in 2 vols., 1713; in 3 vols., ed. by W. T. Thornton, 1813.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 218

SEE: *Works,* ed. Montague Summers, 1926, 3v.; Roswell G. Ham, *Otway and Lee,* 1931; Aline Mackenzie Taylor, *Next to Shakespeare: Otway's Venice Preserved and The Orphan and Their History on the London Stage,* 1950.

PERSONAL

In this play [*The Jealous Bridegroom*] Mr. Otway, the poet, having an inclination to turn actor, Mr. Behn gave him the *King* in the play for a probation part; but he, being not used to the stage, the full house put him to such a sweat and tremendous agony, that being dash't spoilt him for an actor.

John Downes, 1708, *Roscius Anglicanus;* or, an *Historical View of the Stage,* p. 34

Otway had an intimate friend (one Blackstone), who was shot; the murderer fled toward Dover; and Otway pursued him. In his return, he drank water when violently heated, and so got a fever which was the death of him.

John Dennis, 1728-30, *Spence's Anecdotes,* ed. Singer, p. 33

He died April 14, 1685, in a manner which I am unwilling to mention. Having been compelled by his necessities to contract debts, and hunted, as is supposed, by the tarriers of the law, he retired to a publick-house on Tower-hill, where he is said to have died of want; or, as it is related by one of his biographers, by swallowing, after a long fast, a piece of bread which charity had supplied. He went out, as is reported, almost naked in the rage of hunger, and, finding a gentleman in a neighbouring coffee-house, asked him for a shilling. The gentleman gave him a guinea; and Otway going away bought a roll, and was choaked with the first mouthful. All this, I hope, is not true; and there is this ground of better hope, that Pope, who lived near enough to be well informed, relates in Spence's Memorials, that he died of a fever caught by violent pursuit of a thief that had robbed one of his friends. But that indigence, and its concomitants, sorrow and despondency, pressed hard upon him, has never been denied, whatever immediate cause might bring him to the grave.

Samuel Johnson, 1779, *Otway, Lives of the English Poets*

Weak rather than vicious, ill-used and luckless, Otway's unhappy end makes a pitiful story. There are few sadder pictures in literary history than that of the sensitive soul, famished and despairing, making known his misery in a public place, and for lack of bread startling the careless stranger with the words, "I am the poet Otway." "Alas! poor Castalio!"

H. M. Sanders, 1899, "Thomas Otway," *Temple Bar*, vol. 118, p. 386

The Orphan (1680)

This is one of the few plays that keep possession of the stage, and has pleased for almost a century, through all the vicissitudes of dramatick fashion. Of this play nothing new can easily be said. It is a domestick tragedy drawn from middle life. Its whole power is upon the affections; for it is not written with much comprehension of thought, or elegance of expression. But if the heart is interested, many other beauties may be wanting, yet not be missed.

Samuel Johnson, 1779, *Otway, Lives of the English Poets*

In *The Orphan* there is little else but this voluptuous effeminacy of sentiment and mawkish distress, which strikes directly at the root of that mental fortitude and heroic cast of thought which alone makes tragedy endurable—that renders its sufferings pathetic, or its struggles sublime. Yet there are lines and passages in it of extreme tenderness and beauty; and few persons, I conceive (judging from my own experience) will read it at a certain time of life without shedding tears over it as fast as the "Arabian trees their medicinal gums." Otway always touched the reader, for he had himself a heart. We may be sure that he blotted his page often with his tears, on which so many drops have since fallen from glistening eyes, "that sacred pity had engendered there." He had suceptibility of feeling and warmth of genius; but he had not equal depth of thought or loftiness of imagination, and indulged his mere sensibility too much, yielding to the immediate impression or emotion excited in his own mind, and not placing himself enough in the minds and situations of others, or following the workings of nature sufficiently with keenness of eye and strength of will into its heights and depths, its strongholds as well as its weak-sides.

William Hazlitt, 1820, *Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*, Lecture viii

Has drawn more tears from female eyes than almost any other play. The nature of its central incident has kept it from the stage for the last eighty years, but from the time that Mistress Barry first played Monimia the char-

acter has been a favourite one with many of our best actresses, down to Miss O'Neill; while Betterton's part, Castalio, has given opportunities for pathos to an equally long list of his successors. *The Orphan* was the best work that Otway had yet given to the stage. . . . It shows at its highest Otway's power of moving compassion, the continued tension of its unhappiness—when once the earlier scenes are disposed of—being absolutely painful. In Monimia he has created a victim of love ill-fated, worthy for sadness to rank with Penthea in *The Broken Heart,* though she is altogether more lovable and life-like than that somewhat shadowy personage. Indeed, Otway might be called a belated Ford, with tempered horrors and mitigated gloom, yet with fully as intense a sympathy for ill-starred love and the sickness of a heart broken with griefs as he who drew the wretched Annabella; but while Ford in all probability found his sadness in the hearts of others, his own strong and silent nature enabling him to draw coolly with lines not blurred with passion, Otway had in his own breast all too faithful a realisation of the sorrows he portrayed.

H. M. Sanders, 1899, "Thomas Otway," *Temple Bar,* vol. 118, p. 378

Venice Preserved (1682)

I will not defend every thing in his *Venice Preserved;* but I must bear this testimony to his memory,—that the passions are truly touched in it, though perhaps there is somewhat to be desired both in the grounds of them and in the height and elegance of expression. But nature is there,—which is the greatest beauty.

John Dryden, 1695, *Du Fresnoy's Art of Painting,* Preface

Instead of those monsters, he brought forward, early in the month of January 1748, Otway's tragedy of *Venice Preserved.* He had studied the character of *Jaffier* in the preceding season, with intent to perform it, with the advantage of having Quin in the part of *Pierre;* but a fever, that lasted three or four weeks, obliged him to postpone that design. He now prevailed on Barry to undertake the part, and with that great coadjutor, he presented *Jaffier* to the public. The critics have objected to this play, that the title of *Venice Preserved, or a Plot discovered,* is by no means proper, as, instead of keeping the audience in a state of suspence, it announces the catastrophe. This undoubtedly is an error *in limine;* and in the body of the work, we have a gross violation of all decorum, in the low buffoonery of *Antonio* with *Aquilina.* The scene, were it written with true comic humour, would be still exceptionable, as it is detached from the context of the fable, and is merely episodical. It is judiciously omitted in the representation, and the

play as acted, is perhaps the best since the days of Shakespeare. *Pierre* is painted in the most striking colours; his zeal for liberty and abhorrence of oppression would be real virtues, had they not been converted, by the violent temper of the man, into the most furious passions. . . . *Jaffier* is a very different character, perhaps the fittest for the stage in the whole circle of the drama.

Arthur Murphy, 1801, *The Life of David Garrick*

Venice Preserved is more frequently represented than any tragedy after those of Shakspeare; the plot is highly dramatic in conception and conduct: even what seems, when we read it, a defect,—the shifting of our wishes, or perhaps rather of our ill wishes, between two parties, the senate and the conspirators, who are redeemed by no virtue,—does not, as is shown by experience, interfere with the spectator's interest. Pierre, indeed, is one of those villains for whom it is easy to excite the sympathy of the half-principled and the inconsiderate. But the great attraction is in the character of Belvidera; and, when that part is represented by such as we remember to have seen, no tragedy is honored by such a tribute, not of tears alone, but of more agony than many would seek to endure. The versification of Otway, like that of most in this period, runs, almost to an excess, into the line of eleven syllables; sometimes also into the *sdrucciolo* form, or twelve syllables with a dactylic close. These give a considerable animation to tragic verse.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, pt. iv, ch. vi, par. 45

Otway's most memorable work, though inferior in mere poetry and unstudied simplicity to *The Orphan,* surpasses it in tragic grandeur, in variety of action, and in intensity of interest. It has the further great advantage that the interest does not entirely arise from the situation, but that at least one of the characters is a skillful piece of painting from the life, and very probably from the author. In Jaffier we have a vivid portrait of the man who is entirely governed by the affections, and who sways from the ardent resolution to a weakness hardly distinguishable from treachery, as friendship and love alternately incline him. The little we know of Otway warrants the impression that he was such a man, and assuredly he could not have excited such warm interest in a character so feeble in his offence, so abject in his repentance, and in general so perilously verging on the despicable, without a keen sympathy with the subject of his portrait. *Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner.*

Richard Garnett, 1895, *The Age of Dryden*, p. 105

General

The English language owes very little to Otway, though, next to Shakespeare, the greatest genius England ever produced in tragedy. His excellencies lay in painting directly from nature, in catching every emotion just as it rises from the soul, and in all the powers of the moving and pathetic. He appears to have had no learning, no critical knowledge, and to have lived in great distress. When he died (which he did in an obscure house near the Minories), he had about him the copy of a tragedy, which it seems he had sold for a trifle to Bentley the bookseller.

Oliver Goldsmith, 1759, *The Bee*, No. 8, Nov. 24

Through the pompous cloak of the new rhetoric, Thomas Otway now and then reached the passions of the other age. It is plain that the times he lived in marred him, that the oratorical style, the literary phrases, the classical declamation, the well-poised antitheses, buzzed about him, and drowned his note in their sustained and monotonous hum. Had he but been born a hundred years earlier! In his *Orphan* and *Venice Preserved* we encounter the sombre imaginations of Webster, Ford, and Shakspeare, their gloomy idea of life, their atrocities, murders, pictures of irresistible passions, which riot blindly like a herd of savage beasts, and make a chaos of the battlefield with their yells and tumult, leaving behind them but devastation and heaps of dead. Like Shakspeare, his events are human transports and furies—a brother violating his brother's wife, a husband perjuring himself for his wife; Polydore, Chamont, Jaffier, weak and violent souls, the sport of chance, the prey of temptation, with whom transport or crime, like poison poured into the veins, gradually ascends, envenoms the whole man, is spread on all whom he touches, and contorts and casts them down together in a convulsive delirium. Like Shakspeare, he has found poignant and living words, which lay bare the depths of humanity, the strange noise of a machine which is getting out of order, the tension of the will stretched to breaking-point, the simplicity of real sacrifice, the humility of exasperated and craving passion, which longs to the end and against all hope for its fuel and its gratification. Like Shakspeare, he has conceived genuine women, —Monimia, above all Belvidera, who, like Imogen, has given herself wholly, and is lost as in an abyss of adoration for him whom she has chosen, who can but love, obey, weep, suffer, and who dies like a flower plucked from the stalk, when her arms are torn from the neck around which she has locked them. Like Shakspeare again, he has found, at least once, the large bitter buffoonery, the crude sentiment of human baseness; and he has introduced into his most painful tragedy, an obscene caricature, an old senator,

who unbends from his official gravity in order to play at his mistress' house the clown or the valet.

H. A. Taine, 1871, *History of English Literature,* tr. Van Laun, vol. II, bk. iii, ch. ii, p. 24

GEORGE VILLIERS

Second Duke of Buckingham

1628-1687

George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, (b. 1627, d. 1688), wrote *The Rehearsal,* and *Battle of Sedgemoor;* and adapted from Beaumont and Fletcher the comedy of *The Chances.* He also produced several religious tracts. A complete edition of his works was published in 1775. He was the original of the famous character of Zimri in Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel.*

W. Davenport Adams, 1877, *Dictionary of English Literature,* p. 117

SEE: *The Rehearsal,* ed. Montague Summers, 1914; Hester W. Chapman, *Great Villiers,* 1949; John Harold Wilson, *A Rake and His Times,* 1954.

PERSONAL

He was extremely handsome, and still thought himself much more so than he really was: although he had a great deal of discernment, yet his vanity made him mistake some civilities as intended for his person, which were only bestowed on his wit and drollery.

Count Grammont, 1663?-1713, *Memoirs,* by Anthony Hamilton

A man so various, that he seem'd to be
Not one, but all Mankind's Epitome.
Stiff in Opinions, always in the wrong;
Was everything by starts, and nothing long;
But, in the course of one revolving Moon
Was Chymist, Fiddler, Statesman, and Buffoon.

John Dryden, 1681, *Absalom and Achitophel,* First pt.

For his person, he was the glory of the age and any court wherever he came. Of a most graceful and charming mien and behaviour; a strong, tall and active body, all of which gave a lustre to the ornaments of his mind; of an admirable wit and excellent judgment; and had all other qualities of a gentleman. He was courteous and affable to all; of a compassionate nature; ready to forgive and forget injuries. What was said of a great man in

the court of queen Elizabeth, that he used to vent his discontents at court by writing from company, and writing sonnetts, may be said of him; but when he was provoked by the malice of some and ingratitude of others, he might shew that a good natured man might have an ill natured muse. . . . His amours were too notorious to be concealed, and too scandalous to be justified, by saying he was bred in the latitude, of foreign climates, and now lived in a vicious age and court; where his accusers of this crime were as guilty as himself. He lay under so ill a name for this, that whenever he was shut up in his chamber, as he loved to be, *nescio quid,* or in his laboratory, *meditans purgarum,* over the fumes of charcoal, it was said to be with women. . . . We are now come to the last scene of the tragi-comedy of his life. At the death of King Charles he went into the country to his own manor of Helmsley, the seat of the earls of Rutland in Yorkshire. King Charles was his best friend, he loved him and excused his faults. He was not so well assured of his successor. In the country he passed his time in hunting, and entertaining his friends; which he did a fortnight before his death as pleasantly and hospitably as ever he did in his life. He took cold one day after fox-hunting, by sitting on the cold ground, which cast him into an ague and fever, of which he died, after three days sickness, at a tenant's house, Kirby more side, a lordship of his own, near Helmesly, Ap. 16, 1688; ætat. 60.

Brian Fairfax, 1690? *Memoirs of the Life of George Villiers, Second Duke of Buckingham*

He had a great liveliness of wit, and a peculiar faculty of turning all things into ridicule with bold figures and natural descriptions. He had no sort of literature: only he was drawn into chymistry: and for some years he thought he was very near the finding the philosopher's stone; which had the effect that attends on all such men as he was, when they are drawn in, to lay out for it. He had no principles of religion, virtue, or friendship. Pleasure, frolick, or extravagant diversion was all that he laid to heart. He was true to nothing, for he was not true to himself. He had no steadiness nor conduct. He could keep no secret, nor execute any design without spoiling it. He could never fix his thoughts, nor govern his estate, tho' then the greatest in England. He was bred about the King: and for many years he had a great ascendent over him: but he spake of him to all persons with that contempt, that at last he drew a lasting disgrace upon himself. And he at length ruined both body and mind, fortune and reputation equally. The madness of vice appeared in his person in very eminent instances; since at last he became contemptible and poor, sickly, and sunk in his parts, as well as in all other respects, so that his conversation was as much avoided as ever it had been courted.

Gilbert Burnet, 1715-34, *History of My Own Time*

As a statesman Buckingham's only claim to respect is his consistent advocacy of religious toleration, a cause that lost more than it gained by his support. Vanity, and a restless desire for power, which he was incapable of using when obtained, were the governing motives of his political career. His servant, Brian Fairfax, who complains that the world, severe in censuring his foibles, forgot to notice his good qualities, praises his charity, courtesy, good nature, and willingness to forgive injuries. If he was extravagant, he was not covetous. While "his amours were too notorious to be concealed and too scandalous to be justified," much was imputed to him of which he was guiltless.

C. H. Firth, 1899, *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. LVIII, p. 344

The Rehearsal (1672)

Went to see the Duke of Buckingham's ridiculous farce and rhapsody, called *The Recital,* buffooning all plays, yet prophane enough.

John Evelyn, 1681, *Diary*, Dec. 14

The Rehearsal (one of the best pieces of criticism that ever was) and Butler's inimitable poem of Hudibras, must be quite lost to the readers in a century more, if not soon well comented. Tonson has a good key to the former, but refuses to print it, because he had been so much obliged to Dryden.

Dean Lockier, 1730-32, *Spence's Anecdotes*, ed. Singer, p. 48

His poems, which indeed are not very numerous, are capital in their kind; but what will immortalize his memory while our language shall be understood, or true wit relished, is his celebrated play of *The Rehearsal;* . . . a comedy which is so perfect a master-piece in its way, and so truly an original, that notwithstanding its prodigious success, even the task of imitation, which most kinds of excellence have excited inferior geniuses to undertake, has appeared as too arduous to be attempted with regard to this, which through a century and half still stands alone, notwithstanding that the very plays it was written expressly to ridicule are forgotten, and the taste it was meant to expose totally exploded.

Isaac Reed, 1782, *Biographia Dramatica*, vol. I, pt. ii, p. 730

Five editions of *The Rehearsal* appeared in the author's life time. Of the second and third I cannot learn even the dates. There is a copy of the fourth, 1683, in the Bodleian. An examination of the fifth, 1687, would seem to show a general permanence of the text, but that, probably in each

edition, there were here and there additions and alterations *en bloc,* instigated by the appearance of fresh heroic plays: some of these additions increase, with the multiplying corruption of the times, in personality and moral offensiveness. For our literary history, the first edition is sufficient.

Edward Arber, 1869, ed., *The Rehearsal,* Introduction

EDMUND WALLER
1606-1687

Born, at Coleshill, Herts, 3 March 1605. Educated at Eton, and at King's Coll., Camb. M. P. for Amersham, 1621; for Chipping Wycombe, 1626; for Amersham, 1628-29, 1640; for Hastings, 1661-78; for Saltash, 1685-87. Married (i) Anna Banks, 15 July 1631; (ii) Mary Bresse (or Breaux?). Imprisoned for a year, and fined, for high treason, 1643-44; exiled, in France, 1644-53. Died, at Beaconsfield, 21 Oct. 1687. Buried there. WORKS: Four Speeches in the House of Commons, pubd. separately, 1641; *Speech . . . 4 July, 1643,* 1643; *Workes,* 1645; *A Panegyrick to my Lord Protector* (under initials: E. W.), 1655; *Upon the late Storme and Death of his Highness ensuing the same* (1658); *To the King, upon his Majestie's Happy Return* (1660); *Poem on St. James's Park,* 1661; *To my Lady Morton* (anon.) 1661; *To the Queen* (1663); *Pompey the Great* (with others; anon.), 1664; *Upon her Majesties new buildings at Somerset House,* 1665; *Instructions to a Painter,* 1666. POSTHUMOUS: *The Maids Tragedy* altered, etc., 1690. COLLECTED WORKS: *Poems,* ed. by G. T. Drury, 1893. LIFE: by P. Stockdale, 1772.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 291

SEE: *Poems,* ed. G. Thorn-Drury, 1905.

PERSONAL

He is of somewhat above a middle stature, thin body, not at all robust: fine thin skin, his face somewhat of an olivaster; his hayre frizzd, of a brownish colour; full eye, popping out and working: ovall faced, his forehead high and full of wrinckles. His head but small, braine very hott and apt to be cholerique—*Quanto doctior, eo iracundior.*—Cicero. He is something magisteriall, and haz a great mastership of the English language. He is of admirable and gracefull elocution and exceedingly ready. . . . He haz but a tender weake body, but was alwayes very temperate . . . (quaere Samuel Butler) made him damnable drunke at Somerset-house, where, at the water-stayres he fell downe and had a cruell fall. 'Twas pitty to use such a sweet swan so inhumanely. He hath a great memory and remembers a history etc. etc. best when read to him: he uses to make his daughters read to him. Yet, notwithstanding his great witt and mastership in rhetorique etc. he will

oftentimes be guilty of mispelling in English. He writes a lamentably (bad) hand as bad (as) the scratching of a hen.

John Aubrey, 1669-96, *Brief Lives,* ed. Clark, vol. II, pp. 276, 277

With all his brilliant poetic gifts and social accomplishments, Waller's seems to have been a mean and poor nature—selfish and pleasure-loving in prosperity, and abject and servile in adversity.

John Tulloch, 1872, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy in England in the Seventeenth Century,* vol. I, p. 110

As Beatrice and Laura represent the ideal lady of Dante and of Petrarch's age, so Waller's Sacharissa is the type of all that was fair and excellent in the womanhood of the seventeenth century. But Sacharissa, unlike *ces belles dames du tems jadis,* is more for us than a mere dream of beauty and goodness. She has a very attractive and interesting personality of her own. The pictures of her which Vandyke painted, as she appeared to Waller in the bloom of her youthful loveliness, adorn the walls of more than one ancient and stately house. At Penshurst, at Althrop, at Petworth, we see her under many forms and in many different costumes, and always, as Horace Walpole said, "charmingly handsome."

Julia Cartwright (Mrs. Henry Ady), 1893, *Sacharissa; Some Account of Dorothy Sidney, Countess of Sunderland,* Preface, p. v

General

I cannot but bewail the transitoriness of their fame, as well as other men's, when I hear Mr. Waller is turned to burlesque among them, while he is alive, which never happened to old poets till many years after their death; and though I never knew him enough to adore him as many have done, and easily believe he may be, as your Lordship says, enough out of fashion, yet I am apt to think some of the old cut-work bands were of as fine thread, and as well wrought, as any of our new points; and, at least, that all the wit he and his company spent, in heightening love and friendship, was better employed, than what is laid out so prodigally by the modern wits, in the mockery of all sorts of religion and government.

Sir William Temple, 1667, *Letter to Lord Lisle,* August

Chaucer threw in Latin, French, Provençal, and other languages, like new stum to raise a fermentation; in Queen Elizabeth's time, it grew fine, but came not to an head and spirit, did not shine and sparkle, till Mr. Waller set it a running.

Thomas Rymer, 1678-98, *A Short View of the Tragedy of the Last Age*

Waller was the first refiner of English poetry, at least of English rhyme; but his performances still abound with many faults, and what is more material, they contain but feeble and superficial beauties. Gaitey, wit, and ingenuity, are their ruling character: they aspire not to the sublime; still less to the pathetic. They treat of love, without making us feel any tenderness; and abound in panegyric, without exciting admiration. The panegyric, however, on Cromwell, contains more force than we should expect from the other compositions of this poet.

David Hume, 1762, *The History of England, The Commonwealth*

Our poetry was not quite harmonized in Waller's time; so that this, ["On the Death of the Lord Protector."] which would be now looked upon as a slovenly sort of versification, was, with respect to the times in which it was written, almost a prodigy of harmony. A modern reader will chiefly be struck with the strength of thinking and the turn of the compliments bestowed upon the Usurper. Every body has heard the answer our poet made Charles II who asked him how his poem upon Cromwell came to be finer than his panegyric upon himself. Your majesty, replies Waller, knows, that poets always succeed best in fiction.

Oliver Goldsmith, 1767, *The Beauties of English Poetry*

Edmund Waller, sometimes styled "the English Tibullus," excelled all his predecessors, in harmonious versification. His love verses have all the tenderness and politeness of the Roman poet; and his panegyric on Cromwell has been ever esteemed a masterpiece in its kind. His vein is never redundant, like that of Cowley; we frequently wish he had said more, but never that he had said less.

James Granger, 1769-1824, *Biographical History of England,* vol. III, p. 125

Edmund Waller hardly deserves a place among the best names in English literature, either as a poet or as a man; and in giving him a small space here, I yield my own judgement to that of Dryden and Pope. . . . As a poet, Waller is certainly "smooth," as Pope styles him, and comparatively destitute of that affectation which characterizes most of his contemporaries.

Charles D. Cleveland, 1848, *A Compendium of English Literature,* p. 314

No poetical reputation has suffered such vicissitudes as that of Edmund Waller: described, in the inscription upon his tomb, as "inter poetas sui temporis facile princeps," it was still possible, in 1766, to introduce him to the readers of the *Biographia Britannica* as "the most celebrated Lyric Poet

that ever England produced." . . . The revolt against classicism extinguished the reputation of Waller, as it impaired that of men in every way greater than he. . . . He is credited with having polished his poetry like marble, but his execution is frequently careless, and his ear was by no means exceptionally acute. He uses the feeble expletive "so" upwards of twenty times as a rhyme, and occasionally he is satisfied with an assonance. Of the "essence of poetry, invention," he was practically destitute, but it would be difficult to find in the whole range of English Poetry any one more uniformly successful in improving an occasion. To many people his verses on this or that public occasion must have come as a relief, after the "conceited" obscurities of Donne. He makes no great demand on the understanding, he is singularly free from conceits, and his classical allusions are the most trite and ordinary. . . . The general level of Waller's lyrical work is distinctly high.

G. Thorn Drury, 1893, ed., *The Poems of Edmund Waller,* pp. lxix, lxxi, lxxiii

Waller's powers would certainly be in higher repute, but for the trivial or transitory interests to which he gave them. The court poet pays dearly for his courtliness at last. He bestows the best of his experience upon perishable or unprofitable matter, and we are surprised rather than pleased to find not the fly in amber, but amber in the fly.

Rev. Duncan C. Tovey, 1897, *Reviews and Essays in English Literature,* p. 101

JOHN BUNYAN
1628-1688

Born, at Elstow, Bedfordshire, Nov. 1628. Educated at parish school, and brought up to father's trade of tinker. Served as soldier, 1644-46. Married, 1648(?) or 1649(?). Lived at Elstow. Joined Nonconformists, 1653. Removed to Bedford, 1655(?); wife died there. Elected Deacon, 1655; Preacher, 1657. Married again, 1659. At Restoration was arrested, 12 Nov. 1660, for preaching. Imprisoned in Bedford Gaol, 1660-72. Released for a few weeks in 1666. Chosen Minister to Bedford Nonconformists, Jan. 1672; received license to preach, 9 May 1672. Received formal pardon from Crown, 13 Sept. 1672. Perhaps imprisoned for six months in 1675, during which time *Pilgrim's Progress* was written. Active life—preaching in neighbourhood of Bedford and in London. Chaplain to Lord Mayor of London, 1688. Died in London, 31 Aug. 1688; buried in Bunhill Fields, Finsbury. WORKS: *Some Gospel Truths Opened,* 1656; *Vindication* of same, 1657; *A Few Sighs from Hell,* 1658; *The Doctrine of the Law,* 1659; *Profitable Meditations,* (1661); *I will pray with the Spirit,* 1663; *Christian Behaviour,* 1663; *The Four Last Things, etc.* (1664?); *The Holy City,* 1665; *The Resurrection,* 1665; *Grace Abounding,* 1666; *Defence of the Doctrine of Justification,* 1672; *Confession of Faith,* 1672;

Difference of Judgment about Water Baptism, 1673; *Peaceable Principles,* 1674; *Reprobation Asserted* (1675?); *Light for them that sit in Darkness,* 1675; *Instruction for the Ignorant,* 1675; *Saved by Grace,* 1675; *The Strait Gate,* 1676; *Pilgrim's Progress,* pt. i., 1678 (2nd edn. same year); pt. ii., 1684; *Come, and Welcome, to Jesus Christ,* 1678; *Treatise of the Fear of God,* 1679; *Life and Death of Mr. Badman,* 1680; *Holy War,* 1682; *Barren Fig Tree,* 1682; *Greatness of the Soul,* 1683; *Case of Conscience Resolved,* 1683; *Seasonable Counsel,* 1684; *Holy Life the Beauty of Christianity,* 1684; *A Caution to stir up to Watch against Sin,* 1684; *Questions about the Nature . . . of the . . . Sabbath,* 1685; *The Pharisee and the Publican,* 1685; *Book for Boys and Girls* (in later edns. called *Divine Emblems*) 1686; *Jerusalem Sinner Saved* (anon.), 1688; *Advocateship of Jesus Christ,* 1688 (another edn. under title: *Work of Jesus Christ as an Advocate,* 1688); *Discourse of the . . . House of God,* 1688; *Water of Life,* 1688; *Solomon's Temple Spiritualized,* 1688. POSTHUMOUS: *Acceptable Sacrifice,* 1689; *Last Sermon,* 1688; *Works* (including ten posthumous works), 1692; *Heavenly Footman,* ed. by C. Doe, 1698; *Pilgrim's Progress,* pt. i. and ii. together, 1728; *Relation of the Imprisonment of Mr. J. Bunyan* (written in Bedford Gaol), 1765. COLLECTED WORKS: ed. by S. Wilson (2 vols.), 1736; ed. by H. Stebbing (4 vols.), 1859.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 38

SEE: *The Pilgrim's Progress,* ed. James Blanton Wharey, 2nd ed. rev. by Roger Sharrock, 1960; John Brown, *Bunyan, His Life, Times and Work,* 1885, rev. 1928 (by F. M. Harrison); Henri Talon, *John Bunyan, the Man and His Works,* tr. from French by Barbara Wall, 1951; Roger Sharrock, *John Bunyan,* 1954.

PERSONAL

To the Constables of Bedford and to every of them

Whereas information and complaint is made unto us that
J. Napier (notwithstanding the King's Majties late Act of most gracious generall and free pardon to all his subjects for past misdemeanors that by his said clemencie and indulgent
W. Beecher grace and favor they might bee moved and induced for the time to come more carefully to observe his Highness' lawes and Statutes and to continue in theire loyall and due obedience to his Majtie) Yett one John Bunnyon of youre said
G. Blundell Towne Tynker hath divers times within one month last past in contempt of his Majties Good Lawes preached or teached at a Conventicle Meeting, or Assembly under color
Hum: Monoux or ptence of exercise of Religion in other manner than according to the Liturgie or practiss of the Church of England. These are therefore in his Majties name to command you forthwith to apprehend and bring the Body of

Will ffranklin the said John Bunnion before us or any of us or other his Majties Justice of Peace within the said County to answer the premisses and further to doo and receave as to Lawe
John Ventris and Justice shall appertaine and hereof you are not to faile. Given under our handes and seales this fforth day of March in the seven and twentieth yeare of the Raigne of our most gracious Soveraigne Lord King Charles the Second. A° que Dñi juxta &c 1674

Will Spencer
Will Gery St Jo Chervocke Wm Daniels T Browne
W ffoster Gaius Squire.

Order for Arrest, 1674

What hath the devil, or his agents, gotten by putting our great gospel minister Bunyan, in prison? For in prison he wrote many excellent books, that have published to the world his great grace, and great truth, and great judgment, and great ingenuity; and to instance in one, the *Pilgrim's Progress,* he hath suited to the life of a traveller so exactly and pleasantly, and to the life of a Christian, that this very book, besides the rest, hath done the superstitious sort of men more good than if he had been let alone at his meeting at Bedford, to preach the gospel to his own auditory.

Charles Doe, 1692, *The Struggler; Life and Actions of John Bunyan*

Of gipsey descent or otherwise, Bunyan was bred up with, and speedily forgot, the slender proportion of schooling then accessible to the children of the poor in England. He was by nature of enthusiastic feelings, and so soon as the subject of religion began to fix his attention, his mind appears to have been agonized with the retrospect of a misspent youth. A quick and powerful imagination was at work on a tender conscience; for it would appear that his worst excesses fell far short of that utter reprobation to which he conceived them entitled.

Sir Walter Scott, 1830, "Southey's *Life of John Bunyan,*" *Quarterly Review,* vol. 43, p. 470

John Bunyan was a decided Baptist; and in his days, the most incredible falsehoods were invented, and actively circulated, to bias the minds of all classes against this proscribed sect, or any of their writings. Although he had carefully come to a decision upon this subject, he never obtruded it upon public notice; so that, in nearly all his works, water baptism is swallowed up in his earnest desire to win souls to Christ. All his effort is, to fix attention upon that spiritual baptism, or regeneration, which is essential to

salavation, and by which the soul passeth from death unto life. He appeared, in one respect, as an Ishmaelite, and differed with all the numerous sects by which he was surrounded. In his early days, the sectarian spirit was very exclusive; Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists, rarely permitted any but members of their own community to partake with them at the Lord's table. Bunyan was the leader in publicly breaking through this practice. He considered that water baptism was not a church ordinence, but a personal duty, upon which, as to the outward form of ceremony, every one should be left to his own judgment; and he firmly believed that all, who, by the baptism of the Spirit, called God their father, were entitled to a seat at his table, notwithstanding any peculiar or sectarian bias about days, meats, and ceremonies. This drew upon him the severest censures of his brethren in the ministry, particularly of the Baptist denomination.

George Offor, 1850, ed., *The Works of John Bunyan,* Preface, vol. I, p. iv

It has been the fashion to dwell on the disadvantages of his education, and to regret the carelessness of nature which brought into existence a man of genius in a tinker's hut at Elstow. Nature is less partial than she appears, and all situations in life have their compensations along with them. Circumstances, I should say, qualified Bunyan perfectly well for the work which he had to do. If he had gone to school, as he said, with Aristotle and Plato; if he had been broken in at a university and been turned into a bishop; if he had been in any one of the learned professions, he might easily have lost, or might have never known, the secret of his powers. He was born to be the Poet-apostle of the English middle classes, imperfectly educated like himself; and, being one of themselves, he had the key of their thoughts and feelings in his own heart. Like nine out of ten of his countrymen, he came into the world with no fortune but his industry. He had to work with his hands for his bread, and to advance by the side of his neighbours along the road of common business. His knowledge was scanty, though of rare quality. He knew his Bible probably by heart. He had studied history in Foxe's *Martyrs,* but nowhere else that we can trace. The rest of his mental furniture was gathered at first hand from his conscience, his life, and his occupations. Thus, every idea which he received falling into a soil naturally fertile, sprouted up fresh, vigorous, and original.

James Anthony Froude, 1880, *Bunyan* (*English Men of Letters*), p. 172

The County Gaol in which Bunyan spent the twelve years of his life, from 1660 to 1672, was taken down in 1801. It stood on what is now the vacant

piece of land at the corner of the High Street and Silver Street, used as a market-place. Silver Street, so named because it was the quarter where the Jews in early times trafficked in the precious metals, was afterwards known as Gaol Lane, but, since the disappearance of the gaol, has become Silver Street again. The only trace of the gaol itself still left on the spot is the rough stone wall on the north side of the market-place, which was the wall of the small courtyard used by the prisoners. From the interior of the prison, a massive door made of three transverse layers of oak fastened through with iron bolts, and having bars across an open centre, is preserved in the vestry of Bunyan Meeting, Bedford, as a relic of Bunyan's imprisonment; but no sketch of the building itself of any kind has come down to us. There were iron-grated windows on the Gaol Lane, or Silver Street side, and the older people of the last generation used to tell how the prisoners hung purses out of these windows on Sunday mornings, asking the pitiful help of such passers by as were on their way to church or chapel.

John Brown, 1885, *John Bunyan, His Life, Times and Work*, p. 162

Bunyan's personal appearance is thus described by a contemporary: "He was tall of stature, strong-boned through not corpulent, somewhat of a ruddy face with sparkling eyes, wearing his hair on his upper lip after the old British fashion; his hair reddish, but in his latter days had sprinkled with grey; his nose well-set, but not declining or bending, and his mouth moderately large, his fore-head something high, and his habit always plain and modest." Another contemporary writes: "His countenance was grave and sedate, and did so to the life discover the inward frame of his heart, that it was convincing to the beholders, and did strike something of awe into them that had nothing of the fear of God." A third thus describes his manner and bearing: "He appears in countenance to be of a stern and rough temper, but in his conversation mild and affable, not given to loquacity or much discourse in company, unless some urgent occasion required it, observing never to boast of himself in his parts, but rather seem low in his own eyes, and submit himself to the judgment of others."

Edmund Venables, 1886, *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. VII, p. 282

Grace Abounding (1666)

What genuine superstition is exemplified in that bandying of texts and half-texts, and demi-semi-texts, just as memory happened to suggest them, or chance brought them before Bunyan's mind! His tract, entitled, *Grace abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, is a study for a philosopher.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1830, *Table-Talk*, June 10

The author of *Pilgrim's Progress* has also left an autobiography, under the title of *Grace Abounding,* which is as remarkable from a psychological as from an historical point of view. This book is the best study for the origin and essence of Puritanism. It is a work which, in spite of its being specifically English, has the significance for the seventeenth century that the *Confessiones* of St. Augustin have for the fifth, and the *Confessions* of Rousseau for the eighteenth. In these three books beats the full and living pulse of the times in which they were composed.

J. Scherr, 1874-82, *A History of English Literature,* p. 126, note

This proved to be one of his most memorable compositions, and associates itself in one's mind with Augustine's confessions and the heart-utterances of Luther. . . . This book, which in parts is weird and terrible as his own picture of the valley of the shadow of death, is yet in its alternations a faithful transcript of the writer's soul, and must be read in order to a right understanding of the man as he was, both in strength and weakness.

John Brown, 1885, *John Bunyan, His Life, Times and Work,* pp. 179, 180

Grace Abounding resembles thousands of similar narratives in essentials, differing principally in the vigour with which a terrifying religious experience is portrayed. It does not, as some seem to have taken for granted, terminate with what would be technically considered as Bunyan's conversion; on the contrary, a large portion is employed in recording his agonies of apprehension long after he had become a recognized religious instructor, even so late as the beginning of his imprisonment, when he was so little acquainted with the law as to suppose himself in jeopardy of the gallows. Much might be said in censure or compassion of his lamentably distorted views of divine things; but one thing cannot be said, there is not from first to last the slightest symptom of cant. The book is more sincere than Rousseau's *Confessions,* but could not, like that book, have helped a Carlyle or a George Eliot to learn that there was something in them. As *Pilgrim's Progress* may be termed a prosaic *Divine Comedy,* so might the Bunyan of *Grace Abounding* rank as a prosaic Augustine, but an Augustine without a Monica.

Richard Garnett, 1895, *The Age of Dryden,* p. 243

The Pilgrim's Progress (1678-84)

Well, when I had thus put mine ends together,
I shew'd them others, that I might see whether
They would condemn them, or them justify:
And some said, let them live; some, let them die.

Some said, *John,* print it; others said, Not so:
Some said, It might do good; others said, No.
Now was I in a strait, and did not see
Which was the best thing to be done by me:
At last I thought, Since you are thus divided,
I print it will; and so the case decided.

John Bunyan, 1678, *Pilgrim's Progress, The Author's Apology for His Book*

I have been better entertained, and more informed, by a few pages in the *Pilgrim's Progress,* than by a long discourse upon the will and the intellect, and simple or complex ideas.

Jonathan Swift, 1719-20, *A Letter to a Young Clergyman*

His *Pilgrim's Progress* has great merit, both for invention, imagination, and the conduct of the story; and it has had the best evidence of its merit, the general and continued approbation of mankind. Few books, I believe, have had a more extensive sale. It is remarkable, that it begins very much like the poem of Dante; yet there was no translation of Dante when Bunyan wrote. There is reason to think that he had read Spenser.

Samuel Johnson, 1773, *Life* by Boswell, April 30

A splendid edition of Bunyan's *Pilgrim*! Why, the thought is enough to turn one's moral stomach. His cockle-hat and staff transformed to a smart cock'd beaver and a jemmy cane; his amice gray, to the last Regent Street cut; and his painful palmer's pace to the modern swagger. Stop thy friend's sacreligious hand. Nothing can be done for B. but to reprint the old cuts in as homely but good a style as possible. The Vanity Fair, and the Pilgrims there—the silly-soothness in his setting-out countenance—the Christian Idiocy (in a good sense) of his admiration of the shepherds on the Delectable Mountains; the lions, so truly allegorical, and remote from any similitude to Pidcock's; the great head (the author's), capacious of dreams and similitudes, dreaming in the dungeon. Perhaps you don't know my edition, what I had when a child. If you do, can you bear new designs from Martin, enamelled into copper or silver plate by Heath, accompanied with verses from Mrs. Hemans's pen, O how unlike his own!

Charles Lamb, 1828, *Letter to Bernard Barton,* Oct. 11, *Letters,* ed. Ainger, vol. II, p. 203

There is no long allegory in our literature at all comparable to Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress;* and one principal reason why this is the most delightful thing of the kind in the world is, that, though "written under the similitude

of a dream," there is very little of pure allegory in it, and few abstract qualities or passions are personified. From the very constitution of the latter, the reader almost certainly foresees what such typical beings will say, suffer, or do, according to the circumstances in which they are placed. The issue of every trial, of every contest, is known as soon as the action is commenced.

James Montgomery, 1833, *Lectures on General Literature, Poetry, etc.*, p. 147

John Bunyan may pass for the father of our novelists. His success in a line of composition like the spiritual romance or allegory, which seems to have been frigid and unreadable in the few instances where it had been attempted, is doubtless enhanced by his want of all learning, and his low station in life. He was therefore rarely, if ever, an imitator: he was never enchained by rules. Bunyan possessed, in a remarkable degree, the power of representation: his inventive faculty was considerable; but the other is his distinguishing excellence. He saw, and makes us see, what he describes: he is circumstantial without prolixity, and, in the variety and frequent change of his incidents, never loses sight of the unity of his allegorical fable. His invention was enriched, and rather his choice determined, by one rule he had laid down to himself—the adaptation of all the incidental language of Scripture to his own use. There is scarce a circumstance or metaphor in the Old Testament which does not find a place, bodily and literally, in the story of the *Pilgrim's Progress;* and this peculiar artifice has made his own imagination appear more creative than it really is.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, pt. iv, ch. vii, par. 57

It is a significant circumstance that, till a recent period, all the numerous editions of *Pilgrim's Progress* were evidently meant for the cottage and the servant's hall. The paper, the printing, the plates, were all of the meanest description. In general, when the educated minority and the common people differ about the merit of a book, the opinion of the educated minority finally prevails. *Pilgrim's Progress* is perhaps the only book about which, after the lapse of a hundred years, the educated minority has come over to the opinion of the common people.

Thomas Babington Macaulay, 1843, "John Bunyan," *Critical and Historical Essays*

What were bars and bolts and prison walls to him, whose eyes were anointed to see, and whose ears opened to hear, the glory and the rejoicing of the City of God, when the pilgrims were conducted to its golden gates,

from the black and bitter river, with the sounding trumpeters, the transfigured harpers with their crowns of gold, the sweet voices of angels, the welcoming peal of bells in the holy city, and the songs of the redeemed ones? In reading the concluding pages of the first part of *Pilgrim's Progress,* we feel as if the mysterious glory of the Beatific Vision was unveiled before us. We are dazzled with the excess of light. We are entranced with the mighty melody; overwhelmed by the great anthem of rejoicing spirits. It can only be adequately described in the language of Milton in respect to the Apocalypse, as "a seven-fold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies."

John Greenleaf Whittier, 1849, "John Bunyan,"
Old Portraits and Modern Sketches, p. 29

After the Bible, the book most widely read in England is *Pilgrim's Progress,* by John Bunyan. . . . Poor in ideas, full of images, given up to a fixed and single thought, plunged into this thought by his mechanical pursuit, by his prison and his readings, by his knowledge and his ignorance, circumstances, like nature, make him a visionary and an artist, furnish him with supernatural impressions, and sensible images, teaching him the history of grace and the means of expressing it. . . . As children, countrymen, and all uncultivated minds, he transforms arguments into parables; he only grasps truth when it is made simple by images; abstract terms elude him; he must touch forms and contemplate colours.

H. A. Taine, 1871, *History of English Literature,*
tr. Van Laun, vol. I, bk. ii, ch. v, pp. 398, 402, 404

There are many little defects in *Pilgrim's Progress,* yet for two centuries it has been, and it seems likely to continue, the most popular of allegories. This is due to its vivid painting; its stiring action; its all-important theme; its quiet humor, whose lambent flames light many a dark page; its tenderness for the weak; its perfectly intelligible language, whole pages of which contain no word which any child of eight years may not understand; and, above all, its strong human interest, which makes every Christian feel that he is reading the story of his own inner life, while he recognizes the portrait of many a neighbor in those representative characters, which Bunyan delineates with a pen hardly less felicitous than Shakespeare's.

Homer B. Sprague, 1874-77, *Masterpieces in*
English Literature, p. 288

Pilgrim's Progress has been translated into the following languages and dialects:—*Aneityumese,* 1880; *Arabic,* 1834; *Modern Arminian,* 1882; *Armeno-Turkish,* 1881; *Assamese,* 1856; *Bengali,* 1821, 1854, 1877; *Bohemian,* 1871; *Bulgarian,* 1866; *Burmese,* 1841; *Canarese,* 1861, 1867;

Chinese—(Wenli or *Classical Style,* 1874; *Mandarin* or *Court Dialect,* 1872; *Canton Vernacular,* 1870-1; *Amoy Dialect,* 1865); *Dakota,* 1858; *Danish,* 1862; *Dutch,* 1682, etc.; *Dyak,* 1879; *Efik (Old Calabar),* Part 1, 1868, Part 2, 1882; *Esthonian,* 1870; *Fanti,* 1887; *Fijian,* 1867; *Finnish,—*; *French,* 1685, etc.; *Gaelic,* 1812, 1869; *German,* 1703, etc.; *Modern Greek,* 1824, 1831, 1854; *Greco-Turkish,* 1879; *Gujarati,—*; *Hawaiian,* 1842; *Hebrew,* 1844, 1851; *Hindi,—*; *Hungarian,* 1867; *Icelandic,* 1876; *Irish,* 1837; *Italian,* 1851?, 1855, 1863; *Japanese,—*; *Kafir,* 1868; *Khasi,—*; *Lettish,—*; *Lithuanian,* 1878; *Malagasy,* 1838, etc.; *Malay,* 1854; *Malayalim,* 1847; *Maori,* 1854; *Marathi-Balbodh,—*; *Mexican,* 1880; *Norwegian,* 1868, 1874; *Otyiheroro,* 1873; *Panjabi* or *Sikh,* 1843; *Pashtu* or *Afghani,* 1877; *Persian,—*; *Polish,* 1728; *Portuguese,* 1782; *Raratongan,* 1846; *Romaic,* 1824, 1831, 1854; *Russian,* 1881; *Sechuana,* 1848; *Servian,* 1879; *Sesuto,* 1877; *Sgau-Karen,* 1863; *Sindi,—*; *Singhalese,* 1826, 1867; *Spanish,* 1851; *Swedish,* 1743; *Modern Syriac,* 1848; *Tahitian,* 1847; *Tamil,* 1793, 1882; *Telugu,* 1882; *Tshi* or *Ashanti,* 1885; *Urdu* or *Hindostani,* 1841, 1847; *Persian Urdu,—*; *Roman Urdu,—*; *Uriya* or *Orissa,* 1873; *Welsh,* 1688, etc.; *Yoruba,—*.

John P. Anderson, 1888, in *Life of John Bunyan,* by Edmund Venables, Bibliography, p. xxii

It is worth remembering that out of Puritanism, which is regarded as a narrow creed and life, came the only book since the Reformation which has been acceptable to the whole of Christendom, and is still regarded as the substantial truth of the Christian life in all the churches that preach it under any creed of orthodoxy.

George Edward Woodberry, 1890, *Studies in Letters and Life,* p. 218

Next to the Bible, *Pilgrim's Progress* is probably the book which has exercised more influence over the Religion of England than any other. It did for Protestantism what Dante did for Roman Catholicism—whilst exposing sometimes naïvely its weak points, it affirmed its doctrines, and popularized their application to current life. It supplied what Milton's *Paradise Lost* failed to give—some account of the ethics of the soul. From Milton we get our plan of salvation, but from Bunyan we get our conceptions of morality and our theory of spiritual development. Perhaps few of those many who believe that the Bible is their sole spiritual guide realize the extent to which they see the Old Testament through Milton's eyes, and believe in the Gospel according to Bunyan. There is yet another parallel. Bunyan supplied that imaginative touch and that glow of pictorial sentiment without which no religious message seems to win the masses. He did with his *Pilgrim's Prog-*

ress—for a somewhat arid and stern Evangelicalism which repudiated the saintly legends and the material splendors of Rome—what Keble, with his *Christian Year,* did for the dry bones of Anglicanism. Keble made Anglicanism poetical. Bunyan made Evangelicalism romantic. A greater than Bunyan or Keble adopted a similar method, when, as we read, "Without a parable He taught not the people." The extraordinary popularity of Bunyan's great book, one hundred thousand copies of which were circulated in his own lifetime, is not far to seek. He embodied his age—not its secular, but its religious side. No man could have been less influenced by the decapitation of Charles I, the accession of Cromwell, the restoration of that mundane merry monarch, Charles II. He lived through all these, in and out of prison, married and single, with his finger ever on the religious pulse of England; he was as little disturbed by wars and rumors of wars, political cabals and commercial bubbles, as were the great violin-makers of Brescia and Cremona by the political disturbances and bloody squabbles of the small Italian princelets of their day.

H. R. Haweis, 1898, *The Pilgrim's Progress,* Introduction, p. vii

To John Bunyan the English novel owes a very great debt. What fiction needed, if it was ever to come near a portrayal of real life, was first of all to rid itself of the extravagances of the romancer and the cynicism of the picaresque storyteller. Though Bunyan was despised by his contemporary men of letters, it surely could be but a little time before the precision of his imagination and the force and charm of his simple and idiomatic English would be felt and then imitated. As no writer preceding him, Bunyan knew the artistic effect of minute detail in giving reasonableness to an impossible story. In *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678-84) he so mingled with those imaginative scenes of his own familiar Scripture imagery and the still more familiar incidents of English village life, that the illusion of reality must have been to the readers for whom he wrote well-nigh perfect. The allegories of Barclay and Scudéri could not be understood without keys; Bunyan's "Palace Beautiful" needed none.

Wilbur L. Cross, 1899, *The Development of the English Novel,* p. 21

The Holy War (1682)

Though far less varied and fascinating than *Pilgrim's Progress,* is a more perfect allegory, full of passages of *exquisite* symbolism and tenderness. As a piece of metaphysical writing, it seems to me wonderful, from its profound, thoroughly uncalvinistic recognition of the *native powers* of the soul.

. . . It is the most useful book I ever met to lecture on to poor *men,* or an intelligent class of boys.

Dora Greenwell, 1863, *Memoirs,* p. 76

I cannot agree with Macaulay in thinking that, if there had been no *Pilgrim's Progress, The Holy War* would have been the first of religious allegories. . . . *The Holy War* would have entitled Bunyan to a place among the masters of English Literature. It would never have made his name a household word in every English-speaking family on the globe.

James Anthony Froude, 1880, *Bunyan (English Men of Letters),* p. 118

The singular similarity both in the drama and in the spirit of the history and of the allegory cannot be explained, so far as I can see, except by supposing that Bunyan had heard and assimilated the story of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster, and had heard it, not through distorted histories, but by the living voice of tradition. And if it be admitted that the struggle of which Münster became the centre was the archetype of Bunyan's *Holy War,* then we not only get an interesting literary fact, but, what is more important, a vivid light on the mind of the religious common people of England during a period when this country was as virile in its character as at any period in its history.

Richard Heath, 1897, "The Archetype of *The Holy War,*" *The Contemporary Review,* vol. 72, p. 118

Poems

Bunyan's muse is clad in russet, wears shoes and stockings, has a country accent, and walks along the level Bedfordshire roads. If as a poet he is homely and idiomatic, he is always natural, straightforward, and sincere. His lines are unpolished, but they have pith and sinew, like the talk of a shrewd peasant. In the *Emblems* there are many touches of pure poetry, shewing that in his mind there was a vein of silver which, under favourable circumstances, might have been worked to rich issues; and everywhere there is an admirable homely pregnancy and fulness of meaning. He has the strong thought, and the knack of the skilled workman to drive, by a single blow, the nail home to the head.

Alexander Smith, 1867? ed., *Divine Emblems, by John Bunyan,* p. x

It has been the fashion to call Bunyan's verse doggerel; but no verse is doggerel which has a sincere and rational meaning in it. Goethe, who understood his own trade, says that the test of poetry is the substance which

remains when the poetry is reduced to prose. Bunyan had infinite invention. His mind was full of objects which he had gathered at first-hand, from observation and reflection. He had excellent command of the English language, and could express what he wished with sharp, defined outlines, and without the waste of a word. The rhythmical structure of his prose is carefully correct. Scarcely a syllable is ever out of place. His ear for verse, though less true, is seldom wholly at fault, and, whether in prose or verse, he had the superlative merit that he could never write nonsense. If one of the motives of poetical form be to clothe thought and feeling in the dress in which it can be most easily remembered, Bunyan's lines are often as successful as the best lines of Quarles or George Herbert.

James Anthony Froude, 1880, *Bunyan* (*English Men of Letters*), p. 91

The more we read of these poems, not given to the world till twelve years after Bunyan's death, and that by a publisher who was "a repeated offender against the laws of honest dealing," the more we are inclined to agree with Dr. Brown, that the internal evidence of their style renders their genuineness at the least questionable. In the dull prosaic level of these compositions there is certainly no trace of the "force and power" always present in Bunyan's rudest rhymes, still less of the "dash of genius" and the "sparkle of soul" which occasionally discover the hand of a master. Of the authenticity of Bunyan's *Divine Emblems,* originally published three years after his death under the title of *Country Rhymes for Children,* there is no question. The internal evidence confirms the external. The book is thoroughly in Bunyan's vein, and in its homely naturalness of imagery recalls the similitudes of the "Interpreter's House," especially those expounded to Christiana and her boys.

Edmund Venables, 1888, *Life of John Bunyan* (*Great Writers*), p. 122

APHRA BEHN
1640-1689

Born (Aphra Johnson), at Wye, Kent, 10 July 1640. Taken to West Indies early in life. Returned to England, 1658. Married to —— Behn, 1660(?). In favour with Charles II.; sent by him on secret service to Antwerp, 1665. On return to England took to playwriting. First play produced at Duke's Theatre, 1671. Various plays produced, 1671-78, 1681-87. Died, in London, 16 April, 1689. Buried in Westminster Abbey. WORKS: *The Forc'd Marriage,* 1671; *The Amorous Prince,* 1671; *The Dutch Lover,* 1673; *Abdelazar,* 1677; *The Rover,* pt. i. (anon.), 1677; pt. ii., 1681; *The Debauchee* (anon.), 1677; *The Town Fop,* 1677; *Sir Patient Fancy,* 1678;

The Feign'd Curtizana, 1679; *The Roundheads,* 1682; *The City Heiress,* 1682; *The False Count,* 1682; *The Young King,* 1683; *Poems upon several occasions,* 1684; *The Adventures of the Black Lady,* 1684; two *Pindarick Poems* and a poem to the Queen Dowager, 1685; *La Montre,* 1686; *Emperor of the Moon,* 1687; *The Lucky Chance,* 1687; *Lycidus,* 1688; *A Poem to Sir Roger L'Estrange,* 1688; Three *Congratulatory Poems* to *the Queen,* 1688; *The Lucky Mistake,* 1689; *Congratulatory Poem* to the Queen, 1689. POSTHUMOUS: *The Widow Ranter,* ed. by "G.J.", 1690; *The Younger Brother,* ed. by Gildon, 1696; *The Lady's Looking Glass,* 1697. She *translated:* (with others) Ovid's *Heroical Epistles,* 1683; Fontenelle's *Discovery of New Worlds,* 1688; Van Dale's *History of Oracles,* 1699; and *edited Miscellany,* 1685. COLLECTED WORKS: *Histories and Novels,* 1696, 1697; *Poetical Remains,* ed. by Gildon, 1698; *Plays,* 1702; *Plays, Histories and Novels . . . with Life* (6 vols.), 1871.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 22

SEE: *Works,* ed. Montague Summers, 1915, 6 v.; Victoria Sackville-West, *Aphra Behn: The Incomparable Astraea,* 1927.

PERSONAL

Poetry, the supreme pleasure of the mind, is begot, and born in pleasure, but oppressed and killed with pain. This reflexion ought to raise our admiration of Mrs. Behn, whose genius was of that force, to maintain its gaiety in the midst of disappointments, which a women of her sense and merit ought never to have met with. But she had a great strength of mind, and command of thought, being able to write in the midst of company, and yet have the share of the conversation: which I saw her do in writing *Oroonoko,* and other parts of her works, in every part of which you'll find an easy stile and a peculiar happiness of thinking. The passions, that of love especially, she was mistress of, and gave us such nice and tender touches of them, that without her name we might discover the author.

Charles Gildon, 1698, *Mrs. Behn's Histories and Novels,* Epistle Dedicatory

Aphra Behn was a graceful, comely woman, with brown hair and bright eyes, and was painted so in an existing portrait of her by John Ripley. She is said to have introduced milk punch into England. She deserves our sympathy as a warm-hearted, gifted, and industrious woman, who was forced by circumstance and temperament to win her livelihood in a profession where scandalous writing was at that time obligatory. It is impossible, with what we know regarding her life, to defend her manners as correct or her attitude to the world as delicate. But we may be sure that a woman so witty, so active, and so versatile, was not degraded, though she might be lament-

ably unconventional. She was the George Sand of the Restoration, the "chère maïtre" to such men as Dryden, Otway, and Southerne, who all honoured her with their friendship. Her genius and vivacity were undoubted; her plays are very coarse, but very lively and humorous, while she possessed an indisputable touch of lyric genius. Her prose works are decidedly less meritorious than her dramas and the best of her poems.

Edmund Gosse, 1885, *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. IV, p. 130

Despite the offensiveness of her writings, . . . is personally a sympathetic figure. . . . Her eighteen plays, have, with few exceptions, sufficient merit to entitle her to a respectable place among the dramatists of her age, and sufficient indelicacy to be unreadable in this. It may well be believed, on the authority of a female friend, that the authoress "had wit, humour, good-nature, and judgment; was mistress of all the pleasing arts of conversation; was a woman of sense, and *consequently* a woman of pleasure." She was buried in Westminster Abbey, but not in Poets' Corner.

Richard Garnett, 1895, *The Age of Dryden*, p. 146, 147

Oroonoko

She had a great command of the stage, and I have often wondered that she would bury her favourite hero in a novel, when she might have revived him in the scene. She thought either, that no actor could represent him, or she could not bear him represented; and I believed the last, when I remember what I have heard from a friend of her's, that she always told a story more feelingly than she writ.

Thomas Southerne, 1696, *Oroonoko*, Dedication

Posterity is content to know that Astræa trod the stage loosely, and so she gets no credit for the merits of her novels. Yet these merits are real, for Mrs. Aphra Behn had passed her childhood in Surinam, where her father was governor; for some years after the Restoration she had lived at Antwerp as a Government agent; and it was on sundry experiences in these two places that she based her two best-known novels, published in 1698 [sic], after her death,—*Oroonoko* and *The Fair Jilt*. For making use of incidents of real life in the service of fiction at a time when the heroic romance was at the height of its vogue, she deserves all credit. And yet it was no literary reform that she effected. . . . The story of *Oroonoko*, the love-torn and magnanimous negro, of "very little religion" but "admirable morals," who meets a tragic death, belongs to a class of romance that flourished almost a century later, when Rousseau had given popularity to the philosophical

ideas that underlie it. In this novel Mrs. Behn is one of the early precursors of the romantic revival, and finds her logical place in that movement. But her bold conduct of a simple story and her popularity with her contemporaries entitle her also to claim a share in the attempt, faint and ineffective, that the later seventeenth century witnessed, to bring romance into closer relation with contemporary life.

Walter Raleigh, 1894, *The English Novel,* pp. 107, 108

Oroonoko is the first humanitarian novel in English. Though its spirit cannot for a moment be compared, in moral earnestness, with *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* yet its purpose was to awaken Christendom to the horrors of slavery. The time being not yet ripe for it, the romance was for the public merely an interesting story to be dramatized.

Wilbur L. Cross, 1899, *The Development of the English Novel,* p. 20

General

I was desired to say that the author, who is of the fair sex, understood not Latin; but if she do not, I am afraid she has given us occasion to be ashamed who do.

John Dryden, 1680, *Ovid's Epistles,* Preface

This young fellow lay in bed, reading one of Mrs. Behn's novels, for he had been instructed by a friend that he could not find a more effectual method of recommending himself to ladies, than by improving his understanding, and filling his mind with good literature.

Henry Fielding, 1749, *The History of Tom Jones*

Mrs. Behn perhaps, as much as any one, condemned loose scenes, and too warm descriptions; but something must be allowed to human frailty. She herself was of an amorous complexion, she felt the passions intimately which she describes, and this circumstance added to necessity, might be the occasion of her plays being of that cast.

Theophilus Cibber, 1753, *Lives of the Poets,* vol. III, p. 26

Her verses are natural and cordial, written in a masculine style, and yet womanly withal. If she had given us nothing but such poetry as this ["Love Armed"], she would have been as much admired, and known among us all, to this day, as she consented to be among the rakes of her time. Her comedies indeed are alarming and justly incurred the censure of Pope: though it is probable, that a thoughtless good-humor made her pen run over, rather

than real licentiousness; and that, although free enough in her life, she was not so "extravagant and erring" as persons with less mind.

Leigh Hunt, 1847, *Specimens of British Poetesses; Men, Women and Books*

Her name would have been excluded from all mention in these pages, had it not been necessary to mark the true state of female literature at this period. Aphara Behn is the first English authoress upon record whose life was openly wrong, and whose writings were obscene.

Jane Williams, 1861, *The Literary Women of England,* p. 128

In eighteen years she saw nineteen of her dramas applauded or hissed by the debauched and idle groundlings of the Duke's Theatre; and forced to write what would please, she wrote in a style that has put a later generation very justly to the blush. But in power of sustained production she surpassed all her contemporaries except Dryden, since beside this ample list of plays, she published eight novels, some collections of poetry, and various miscellaneous volumes. The bulk of her writings, and the sustained force so considerable a body of literature displays, are more marked than the quality of her style, which is very irregular, uncertain and untutored. She possessed none of that command over her pen which a university training had secured to the best male poets of her time. But she has moments of extraordinary fire and audacity, when her verse throws off its languor, and progresses with harmony and passion. Her one long poem, *The Voyage to the Isle of Love,* which extends to more than two thousand lines, is a sentimental allegory, in a vague and tawdry style, almost wholly without value; her best pieces occur here and there in her plays and among her miscellaneous poems. It is very unfortunate that one who is certainly to be numbered, as far as intellectual capacity goes, in the first rank of English female writers, should have done her best to remove her name from the recollection of posterity by the indelicacy and indiscretion of her language.

Edmund Gosse, 1880, *English Poets,* ed. Ward, vol. I, p. 419

SIR GEORGE ETHEREGE

1635?-1691?

Sir George Etherege, 1635(?)-1691. Born, 1635(?). Perhaps educated at Cambridge, and subsequently at one of the Inns of Court. Comedy, *The Comical Revenge,* produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, 1664; other plays, 1667-76. Knighted, about 1680(?). Married about same time. To Hague on diplomatic mission, 1684(?); at Ratisbon, 1685-88. To Paris; died there, 1691. Works: *The Comical Revenge,* 1664; *She Wou'd if She*

Cou'd, 1667; *The Man of Mode,* 1676. COLLECTED WORKS: 1704; ed. by A. W. Verity, 1888.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 94

SEE: *Plays,* ed. H. F. B. Brett-Smith, 1927, 2v., *Poems,* ed. James Thorpe, 1963; Dale Underwood, *Etherege and the Seventeenth-Century Comedy of Manners,* 1957.

PERSONAL

Nature, you know, intended me for an idle fellow, and gave me passions and qualities fit for that blessed calling, but fortune has made a changeling of me, and necessity now forces me to set up for a fop of business.

Sir George Etherege, 1687, *The Letterbook;* in Gosse, *Seventeenth-Century Studies,* p. 264

Sir George Etherege was as thorough a fop as ever I saw; he was exactly his own Sir Fopling Flutter. And yet he designed Dorimant, the genteel rake of wit, for his own picture.

Dr. Lockier of Peterborough, 1730-32, *Spence's Anecdotes,* ed. Singer, p. 47

In the words of Oldys, Sir George Etherege was "a man of much courtesy and delicate address." Profligacy, sprightliness, and good humour, seem to have been his principal characteristics. In person he is described as a "fair, slender, and genteel man," and his face is said to have been handsome. In later times, however, his comeliness is reported to have been spoiled by the effect of intemperance and the exceeding irregularity of his career.

John Heneage Jesse, 1839-57, *Memoirs of the Court of England during the Reign of the Stuarts, Including the Protectorate,* vol. III, p. 324

GENERAL

George Etheridge a Comical writer of the present age, whose two Comedies, *Love in a Tub,* and *She would if she could,* for pleasant wit and no bad Oeconomy are judged not unworthy the applause they have met with.

Edward Phillips, 1675, *Theatrum Poetarum Anglicanorum,* ed. Brydges, p. 130

A Gentleman sufficiently eminent in the Town for his Wit and Parts, and One whose tallent in sound Sence, and the Knowledge of true Wit and Humour, are sufficiently conspicuous. . . . *Comical Revenge.* . . . This Comedy tho' of a mixt nature, part of it being serious, and writ in Heroick Verse;

yet has succeeded admirably on the Stage, it having always been acted with general approbation. *Man of Mode, or Sir Fopling Flutter.* . . . This Play is written with great Art and Judgment, and is acknowledg'd by all, to be as true Comedy, and the Characters as well drawn to the Life, as any Play that has been Acted since the Restauration of the *English* Stage. . . . *She wou'd if she cou'd.* . . . This Comedy is likewise accounted one of the first Rank, by several who are known to be good Judges of Dramatick Poesy. Nay our present Laureat says, 'Tis the best Comedy written since the Restauration of the Stage. I heartily wish for the publick satisfaction, that this great Master would oblidge the World with more of his Performances, which would put a stop to the crude and indigested Plays, which for want of better, cumber the Stage.

Gerard Langbaine, 1691, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets,* pp. 186, 187

This expedient to supply the deficiencies of wit, has been used more or less by most of the authors who have succeeded on the stage; though I know but one who has professedly writ a play upon the basis of the desire of multiplying our species, and that is the polite Sir George Etheridge; if I understand what the lady would be at, in the play called *She would if She could.* Other poets have, here and there, given an intimation that there is this design, under all the disguises and affectations which a lady may put on: but no author except this, has made sure work of it, and put the imaginations of the audience upon this one purpose, from the beginning to the end of the comedy. It has always fared accordingly; for whether it be that all who go to this piece would if they could, or that the innocents go to it, to guess only what *she would if she could,* the play has always been well received.

Joseph Addison, 1711, "Indecency Proceeds From Dulness," *The Spectator,* No. 51, Apr. 28

He seems to have possessed a sprightly genius, to have had an excellent turn for comedy, and very happy in a courtly dialogue. We have no proof of his being a scholar, and was rather born, than made a poet. He has not escaped the censure of the critics; for his works are so extremely loose and licentious, as to render them dangerous to young, unguarded minds: and on this account our witty author is, indeed, justly liable to the severest censure of the virtuous, and sober part of mankind.

Theophilus Cibber, 1753, *Lives of the Poets,* vol. III, p. 39

Etheredge's [sic] comedies possess, in their chronological progression, both importance and interest, as furnishing early—probably the earliest—exam-

ples of a style of comic dialogue which was of natural growth and which owed much less than might at first be supposed to French examples. . . . He wrote as a man of the world for men and women of the world, who flocked to his plays to see themselves in his comic mirror, and pointed the way to the style of English comedy, of which Congreve afterwards shone as the acknowledged master. Of characterisation few traces are perceptible in Etheredge's comedies; and in this respect too he anticipated Congreve.

Adolphus William Ward, 1875-99, *A History of English Dramatic Literature,* vol. III, pp. 443, 444

According to all the bibliographers, old and new, Etheredge's [sic] first play was *She Would if She Could,* 1668, immediately followed by *The Comical Revenge,* first printed in 1669. If this were the case, the claim of Etheredge to critical attention would be comparatively small. Oldys, however, mentions that he had heard of, but never seen, an edition of this latter play of 1664. Neither Langbaine, Gildon, or any of their successors believe in the existence of such a quarto, nor is a copy to be found in the British Museum. However, I have been so fortunate as to pick up two copies of this mythical quarto of 1664, the main issue of which I suppose to have been destroyed by some one of the many accidents that befell London in that decade, and Etheredge's precedence of all his more eminent comic contemporaries is thus secured. The importance of this date, 1664, is rendered still more evident when we consider that it constitutes a claim for its author for originality in two distinct kinds. *The Comical Revenge, or Love in a Tub,* which was acted at the Duke of York's Theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, in the summer of 1664, is a tragi-comedy, of which the serious portions are entirely written in rhymed heroics, and the comic portions in prose. . . . The serious portion of *The Comical Revenge* is not worth considering in comparison with the value of the prose part. In the under-plot, the gay, realistic scenes which give the play its sub-title of the *Tale of a Tub,* Etheredge virtually founded English comedy, as it was successively understood by Congreve, Goldsmith, and Sheridan.

Edmund Gosse, 1883, *Seventeenth-Century Studies,* pp. 235, 239

Sir George Etheredge [sic] is neither an edifying nor an attractive writer of comedy, but his plays are of considerable historical importance as prototypes of the comedy of manners afterwards so brilliantly developed by Congreve. . . . *The Man of Mode* is celebrated for the character of Sir Fopling Flutter, who is said to have been the image of the author, though it is added on the same authority that his intention had been to depict himself in the character of the heartless rake Dorimant, whom others took for Rochester. All the plays suffer from a deficiency of plot, a deficiency of

wit, and a superfluity of naughtiness, but cannot be denied to posses a ligth airy grace, and to have imbibed something of the manner, though little of the humour, of Molière.

Richard Garnett, 1895, *The Age of Dryden,* p. 121

NATHANIEL LEE

1649?-1692

Nathaniel Lee (d. 1692), the son of Dr. Lee, Incumbent of Hatfield, was educated at Westminster School and at Trinity College, Cambridge; but, left to his own resources, he took to the stage, and, in 1672, played at the Duke's Theatre the part of Duncan in *Macbeth.* Although an admirable reader, he was unable to get his living as an actor. He then produced, at the age of twenty-five, the first of his eleven plays, *Nero;* and between 1675 and 1684, this was followed by eight other plays of his own, including his two most popular, *The Rival Queens; or, Alexander the Great* (1677), and *Theodosius; or, the Force of Love* (1680). He also joined Dryden in the plays of *Œdipus* (1679) and *The Duke of Guise* (1683). There was a wildfire of imagination in Lee, and he drank too freely. In November, 1684, he was received into Bedlam, where he remained four years. . . . Between his recovery and his death, at the age of about forty, Lee wrote, in 1689 and 1690, two more plays, *The Princess of Cleve* and *The Massacre of Paris,* but he was chiefly dependent upon ten shillings a week from the Theatre Royal.

Henry Morley, 1879, *A Manual of English Literature,* ed. Tyler, p. 426

SEE: *Works,* ed. T. B. Stroup and A. L. Cooke, 1954-55, 2v.; Roswell G. Ham, *Otway and Lee,* 1931.

PERSONAL

I remember, poor Nat. Lee, who was then upon the very verge of madness, yet made a sober and a witty answer to a bad poet, who told him, "It was an easie thing to write like a madman": "No," said he, "it is very difficult to write like a madman, but it is a very easie matter to write like a fool."

John Dryden, 1694? *Letter to Dennis, Malone's Dryden,* vol. II

Was so pathetic a reader of his own scenes, that I have been informed by an actor who was present, that while Lee was reading to major Mohun at a rehearsal, Mohun in the warmth of his admiration threw down his part and said—"Unless I were able to play it as well as you read it, to what purpose should I undertake it?" And yet this very author, whose elocution raised such admiration in so capital an actor, when he attempted to be an

actor himself, soon quitted the stage in an honest despair of ever making any profitable figure there.

Colley Cibber, 1739, *An Apology for His Life*, p. 71

Educated at Westminster school, and Trinity Hall, Cambridge. He was a very handsome as well as ingenious man; but given to debauchery which necessitated milk-diet, when some of his university comrades visiting him, he fell to drinking with them out of all measure, which flying up into his head, caused his face to break out into those carbuncles which were afterwards observed there; and also touched his brain, occasioning that madness so much lamented in so rare a genius. Tom Brown says he wrote while he was in Bedlam a play of twenty-five acts; and Mr. Bowman tells me that going once to visit him there, Lee shewed him a scene, "in which," says he, "I have done a miracle for you." "What's that?" said Bowman. "I have made you a good priest."

William C. Oldys, 1761, *MS., Note to Langbaine's Account of the English Dramatick Poets*

General

Nat Lee stepp'd in next, in hopes of a prize.
Apollo rememb'ring he had not once in thrice.
By the rubies in's face, he could not deny
But he had as much wit as wine could supply;
Confess'd that indeed he had a musical note,
But sometimes strained so hard that it rattled in the throat;
Yet own'd he had sense and 't encourage him for 't
He made him his Ovid in Augustus's court.

John Wilmot, Earl Rochester, 1680? *Session of the Poets*

It has often been observed against me, that I abound in ungoverned fancy; but I hope the world will pardon the sallies of youth. Age, despondence, and dullness come too fast of themselves. I discommend no man for keeping the beaten road; but I am sure the noble hunters that follow the game must leap hedges and ditches sometimes, and run at all, or never come into the fall of the quarry. My comfort is, I cannot be so ridiculous a creature to any man as I am to myself: for who should know the house so well as the good man at home?—who, when his neighbours come to see him, still sets the best rooms to view; and, if he be not a wilful ass, keeps rubbish and lumber in some dark hole, where nobody comes but himself, to mortifie at melancholy hours.

Nathaniel Lee, 1680, *Theodosius, or the Force of Love*, Dedication

An Author whose Plays have made him sufficiently remarkable to those who call themselves *The Witts;* and One whose Muse deserv'd a better Fate than Bedlam. . . . However, before this misfortune befel him, he writ several Dramatical Pieces, which gave him Title to the first Rank of Poets; there being several of his Tragedies, as *Mithridates, Theodosius,* &c., which have forc'd Tears from the fairest Eyes in the World: his Muse indeed seem'd destin'd for the Diversion of the Fair Sex; so soft and passionately moving, are his Scenes of Love written.

Gerard Langbaine, 1691, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets,* pp. 320, 321

Among our modern English poets, there was none who was better turned for tragedy than Lee; if instead of favouring the impetuosity of his genius, he had restrained it, and kept it within its proper bounds. His thoughts are wonderfully suited to tragedy, but frequently lost in such a cloud of words, that it is hard to see the beauty of them. There is an infinite fire in his works, but so involved in smoke, that it does not appear in half its lustre. He frequently succeeds in the passionate parts of the tragedy, but more particularly where he slackens his efforts, and eases the stile of those epithets and metaphors, in which he so much abounds.

Joseph Addison, 1711, "On Tragedy," *The Spectator,* No. 39, April 14

Many of the Bedlam witticisms of this unfortunate man have been recorded by those who can derive mirth from the most humiliating shape of human calamity. His rant and turgidity as a writer are proverbial; but those who have witnessed justice done to the acting of his *Theodosius* must have felt that he had some powers in the pathetic.

Thomas Campbell, 1819, *Specimens of the British Poets*

In spite of his undoubted ability and his increasing experience, he did not contrive to write one really good play, except, perhaps, *Lucius Junius Brutus.* . . . Lee came very near being a master of sounding blank verse. He was solitary among the dramatists of the age in taking Milton for his model, and even when he is most turgid and most unnatural, there is often a Miltonic swell in his verse which preserves it from complete absurdity. He has often been compared to the early Elizabethans, and he may be called a vulgar Marlowe. His heroic language is often spoiled in its most gorgeous passages by an incidental meanness of expression, as in the famous line where Brutus says to his son—

"I'll *tug* with Teraminta for thy heart."

Lee marks a certain crisis in tragedy. He shrieked so loud that succeeding

playwrights gave up the idea of out-screaming so bombastic a writer, and the tendency of tragedy in future was to become sentimental and reflective.

Edmund Gosse, 1888, *A History of Eighteenth Century Literature*, p. 58

THOMAS SHADWELL

1642?-1692

Born, at Broomhill House, Norfolk, 1640. At school at Bury St. Edmunds, 1645-46. Matric., Caius Coll., Cambridge, as Pensioner, 17 Dec. 1656; took no degree. Studied Law at Middle Temple. First play, *The Sullen Lovers,* produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields, 5 May 1668. Devoted himself mainly to drama, 1668-82. Poet-Laureate and Historiographer Royal, 1688. Died suddenly, in London, 19 Nov. 1692. WORKS: *The Sullen Lovers,* 1668; *The Royal Shepherdess,* 1669; *The Humourists,* 1671; *The Miser,* 1672; *Epsom Wells,* 1673; *Notes and Observations on the Empress of Morocco* (anon.; with Dryden and John Crown), 1674; *Psyche,* 1675; *The Libertine,* 1676; *The Virtuoso,* 1676; *The History of Timon of Athens,* 1678; *A True Widow,* 1679; *The Woman-Captain,* 1680; *The Medal of John Bayes* (anon.), 1682; *Satyr to his Muse* (anon.; attrib. to Shadwell), 1682; *The Lancashire Witches, and Teague O'Divelly,* 1682; *A Lenten Prologue* (1683?); *The Squire of Alsatia,* 1688; *Bury Fair,* 1689; *A Congratulatory Poem on his Highness the Prince of Orange* (under initials: T. S.), 1689; *A Congratulatory Poem to . . . Queen Mary,* 1689; *The Amorous Bigotte,* 1690; *Ode on the Anniversary of the King's Birth,* 1690; *Ode to the King on his Return from Ireland* (1690); *The Scowrers,* 1691; *Votum Perenne,* 1692. POSTHUMOUS: *The Volunteers,* 1693. He *translated*: Juvenal's Tenth Satire, 1687. COLLECTED WORKS: *Dramatic Works* (4 vols.), 1720.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors*, p. 252

SEE: *Complete Works,* ed. Montague Summers, 1927, 5 v.; A. S. Borgman, *Thomas Shadwell: His Life and Comedies.*

PERSONAL

That our author was a man of great honesty and integrity, an inviolable fidelity and strictness in his word, an unalterable friendship wherever he professed it, and however the world may be mistaken in him, he had a much deeper sense of religion than many who pretended more to it. His natural and acquired abilities made him very amiable to all who knew and conversed with him, a very few being equal in the becoming qualities, which adorn, and set off a complete gentleman; his very enemies, if he have now any left, will give him this character, at least if they knew him so thoroughly as I did.—His death seized him suddenly, but he could not be unprepared,

since to my certain knowledge he never took a dose of opium, but he solemnly recommended himself to God by prayer.

Nicholas Brady, 1692, *Funeral Sermon*

Notwithstanding that Lord Rochester has said,

None seem to touch upon true comedy,
But hasty Shadwell and slow Wycherley;

yet that Lord had a better opinion of his conversations than his writings, when he said, that if Shadwell had burned all he wrote, and printed all he spoke, he would have shewn more wit and humour than any other poet. But the wit of his conversation was often very immoral, obscene, and profane. By which course having meanness of spirit and servility to render himself ridiculous and contemptible to men of fortune, title, and wit, he got their favour and assistance, under the pretence of being a useful instrument of the Revolution. Lord Lansdowne has a short discourse on these two lines above, against the remark of Wycherley's being a slow writer.

William C. Oldys, 1761, *MS., Note to Langbaine's Account of the English Dramatick Poets*

General

Is counted the best comoedian we have now.

John Aubrey, 1669-96, *Brief Lives*, ed. Clark, vol. II, p. 226

Of all our modern wits, none seem to me
Once to have touched upon true comedy,
But hasty Shadwell, and slow Wycherly.
Shadwell's unfinished works do yet impart
Great proofs of force of nature, none of art.
With just, bold strokes he dashes here and there,
Showing great mastery with little care,
Scorning to varnish his good touches o'er,
To make fools and women praise them more.

John Wilmot, Earl Rochester, 1680? *A Session of Poets*

Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,
Mature in dulness from his tender years;
Shadwell alone of all my sons is he
Who stands confirmed in full stupidity.
The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,
But Shadwell never deviates into sense.
Some beams of wit on other souls may fall,
Strike through and make a lucid interval;

But Shadwell's genuine night admits no ray,
His rising fogs prevail upon the day.

John Dryden, 1682, *Mac Flecknoe,* v. 15-24

I am willing to say the less of Mr. *Shadwell,* because I have publickly profess'd a Friendship for him: and tho' it be not of so long date, as some former Intimacy with others; so neither is it blemished with some unhandsome Dealings, I have met with from Persons, where I least expected it. I shall therefore speak of him with the Impartiality that becomes a Critick; and own I like *His* Comedies better than Mr. *Dryden's;* as having more Variety of Characters, and those drawn from the Life; I mean Men's Converse and Manners, and not from other Mens Ideas, copyed out of their publick Writings: tho' indeed I cannot wholly acquit our *Present Laureat* from borrowing; his Plagiaries being in some places too bold and open to be disguised, of which I shall take Notice, as I go along; tho' with this Remark, That several of them are observed to my Hand, and in a great measure excused by himself, in the publick Acknowledgment he makes in his several Prefaces, to the Persons to whom he was obliged for what he borrowed.

Gerard Langbaine, 1691, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets,* p. 443

Shadwell's *Squire of Alsatia* took exceedingly at first, as an occasional play: it discovered the cant terms that were before not generally known, except to the cheats themselves; and was a good deal instrumental in causing that nest of villains to be regulated by public authority. The story it was built on was a true fact.

John Dennis, 1728-30, *Spence's Anecdotes,* ed. Singer, p. 33

The Virtuoso of Shadwell does not maintain his character with equal strength to the end: and this was that writer's general fault. Wycherley used to say of him: "That he knew how to start a fool very well; but that he was never able to run him down."

Alexander Pope, 1728-30, *Spence's Anecdotes,* ed. Singer, p. 10

His *Libertine* (taken from the celebrated Spanish story) is full of spirit; but it is the spirit of licentiousness and impiety.

William Hazlitt, 1818, *Lectures on the English Comic Writers,* Lecture iii

Nahum Tate, of all my predecessors, must have ranked the lowest of the laureates, if he had not succeeded Shadwell.

Robert Southey, 1835, *Life of Cowper*

Shadwell's plays abound in songs, but the bulk of them are too slovenly, frivolous, or licentious, to deserve preservation in a separate form. His comedies, admirable as pictures of contemporary meanness, supplied an appropriate setting for his coarse and reckless verses; but such pieces will not bear to be exhibited apart from the scenes for which they were designed.

Robert Bell, 1867? ed., *Songs from the Dramatists*, p. 248

He is known to us chiefly from Dryden's ludicrous caricature, but under that burly and unwieldy exterior—that "tun of man"—there lurked a rich vein of comic humour, keen power of observation, and much real dramatic power both in vivid portraiture and in the presentation of incident.

John Churton Collins, 1878-95, "Dryden," *Quarterly Review; Essays and Studies*, p. 46

Notwithstanding the peculiarities of Shadwell's outspoken muse, there are many scenes in his comedies of great humour and originality; in *The Virtuoso,* for instance, the scene in the laboratory, where Sir Nicholas Gimcrack, the Virtuoso, is learning to swim upon a table, by imitating the movements of a frog in a bowl of water, has some exceedingly comical situations and dialogue, quite equal to the celebrated Undertaker's Scene in Steele's *Funeral.*

Walter Hamilton, 1879, *The Poets Laureate of England*, p. 121

Shadwell depended, like Jonson—whom he vainly tried to imitate—for the amusement of his hearers on the "humours" of his characters; he had little wit, though it is not fair to bracket him, as Dryden did, with Settle. His comedies are useful for the vivid account they give of the life of his time. Although no poet, he was, as Scott says, an acute observer of nature, and he showed considerable skill in invention. He seems to have been naturally coarse, and was grossly indecent without designing to corrupt.

G. A. Aitken, 1897, *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. LI, p. 342

HENRY VAUGHAN
1622-1695

Henry Vaughan was born in Llansaintfread, Brecknockshire, Wales in 1622. He was educated at Oxford, where he suffered a short imprisonment for his too zealous loyalty to the royal cause, left without taking a degree, studied medicine in London, and passed the remainder of his life in his native parish. He published four volumes of poetry: a translation of the

tenth satire of Juvenal, with original amatory pieces, 1646; *Silex Scintillans,* 1650; *Olor Iscanus* (Swan of the Usk), 1651; and *Thalia Redivivus, the Pastimes and Diversions of a Country Muse,* 1678;—and two of prose: *The Mount of Olives,* 1652; and *Flores Solitudinis,* 1678. All of these, except the first, were devotional. From his living in the country of the ancient Silures, Vaughan was called "the Silurist." He died on the 23d of April, 1695.

Rossiter Johnson, 1875, *Little Classics, Authors,* p. 238

SEE: *Complete Works,* ed. A. B. Grosart, 1870-71, 4 v.; *Works,* ed. L. C. Martin, 1914, 2 v., rev. 1958 (OSA); *Complete Poetry,* ed. French Fogle, 1964; Edmund Blunden, *On the Poems of Vaughan,* 1927; Elizabeth Holmes, *Vaughan and the Hermetic Philosophy,* 1932; F. E. Hutchinson, *Vaughan: A Life and Interpretation,* 1947; R. A. Durr, *On the Mystical Poetry of Henry Vaughan,* 1962.

PERSONAL

There are two Vaughans, twinnes, both very ingeniose and writers. One writt a poeme called *Olor Iscanus* (Henry Vaughan, the first-borne), and another booke of Divine Meditations. His brother wrote several treatises, whose names I have now forgott, but names himself *"Eugenius Philalethes."* . . . Henry Vaughan, "Silurist":—you know Silures contayned Breconockshire, Herefordshire, etc.

John Aubrey, 1669-96, *Brief Lives,* ed. Clark, vol. II, pp. 268, 269

Henry Vaughan, called the *Silurist* from that part of Wales whose inhabitants were in ancient times called Silures, brother twin (but elder) to Eugenius Philalethes, alias Tho. Vaughan . . . was born at Newton S. Briget, lying on the river Isca, commonly called Uske in Brecknockshire, educated in grammar learning in his own country for six years under one Matthew Herbert a noted schoolmaster of his time, made his first entry into Jesus College in Mich. term 1638, aged 17 years: where spending two years or more in logicals under a noted tutor, was taken thence and designed by his father for the obtaining of some knowledge in the municipal laws at London. But soon after the civil war beginning, to the horror of all good men, he was sent for home, followed the pleasant paths of poetry and philology, and published several specimens thereof, of which his *Olor Iscanus* was most valued. Afterwards applying his mind to the study of physic, became at length eminent in his own country for the practice thereof, and was esteemed by scholars an ingenious person, but proud and humorous. . . . He died in the latter end of April (about the 29th day) in sixteen hundred ninety and five, and was buried in the parish church of Llansenfreid about two miles distant from Brecknock in Brecknockshire.

Anthony Wood, 1691-1721, *Athenæ Oxonienses,* vol. II, ff. 926, 927

If ever Poet had a poet's birth-place it was the Silurist. . . . One marvels how William and Mary Howitt missed such a shrine for their *Homes and Haunts*. . . . Dates are sorrowfully lacking: but having either in London or Edinburgh, or in some continental University taken his diploma of Doctor of Medicine—search and research far and wide, in which I have been generously aided, have failed to come on his name anywhere—he began his "practice" in the town of Brecon. . . . Such is the imperfect Story of the outer Life of Henry Vaughan. None can mourn our scanty materials more than ourselves, fuller though they be relatively to our precursor's. Yet we have done our fruitless best to get more.

Alexander B. Grosart, 1871, ed., *Works in Verse and Prose Complete of Henry Vaughan, Silurist;* Memorial Introduction, vol. I, pp. xxxiv, xxxv, xxxix, xlvi

General

He is one of the harshest even of the inferior order of the school of conceit; but he has some few scattered thoughts that meet our eye amidst his harsh pages, like wild flowers on a barren heath.

Thomas Campbell, 1819, *Specimens of the British Poets*

His poems display much originality of thought, and frequently likewise much felicity of expression. The former is, indeed, at times condensed into obscurity, and the latter defaced with quaintness. But Vaughan never degenerates into a smooth versifier of commonplaces. One, indeed, of his great faults as a poet, is the attempt to crowd too much of matter into his sentences, so that they read roughly and inharmoniously, the words almost elbowing each other out of the lines. His rhymes, too, are frequently defective; and he delights in making the sense of one line run over into the line following. . . . His faults are in a great measure those of the age he lived in, and the matter he imitated, while his beauties are all his own. . . . Among those who can prize poetic thought, even when clad in a dress somewhat quaint and antiquated, who love to commune with a heart overflowing with religious ardour, and who do not value this the less because it has been lighted at the earlier and purer fires of Christianity, and has caught a portion of their youthful glow, poems like those of Henry Vaughan's will not want their readers, nor will such readers be unthankful to have our author and his works introduced to their acquaintance.

H. F. Lyte, 1847, ed., *Poetical Works of Henry Vaughan,* Biographical Sketch

We have said little about the deep godliness, the spiritual Christianity, with which every poem is penetrated and quickened. Those who can detect and

relish this best, will not be the worst pleased at our saying little about it. Vaughan's religion is deep, lively, personal, tender, kindly, impassioned, temperate; "it sits i' the centre." His religion grows up, effloresces into the ideas and forms of poetry as naturally, as noiselessly, as beautifully as the life of the unseen seed finds its way up into the "bright consummate flower."

John Brown, 1849, "Vaughan's Poems," *North British Review*, vol. 11, p. 59

Let every one who is well-acquainted with Wordsworth's grand ode—that on the Intimations of Immortality—turn his mind to a comparison between that and this: he will find the resemblance remarkable. Whether *The Retreat* suggested the form of the *Ode* is not of much consequence, for the *Ode* is the outcome at once and essence of all Wordsworth's theories; and whatever he may have drawn from *The Retreat* is glorified in the *Ode* . . . Vaughan's poem is the more definite of the two, and gives us in its close, poor as that is compared with the rest of it, just what we feel is wanting in Wordsworth's—the hope of return to the bliss of childhood.

George Macdonald, 1868, *England's Antiphon*

I have another reason for presenting *The Retreat,* that will appear immediately: but apart from that and inevitable memories of Wordsworth, surely we have there some very remarkable scrutiny and interrogation of subtleties of our deepest spiritual being, such as were not frequent two hundred and fifty years ago or thereby. I ask the Reader to mark the intense yearning and feeling away back to child-time in the poem: the resolute and almost awesome getting back again in maturity, thinkings and feelings and instinct-aspirations long vanished, as of a lost tune returning in a dream. I don't know that anywhere in our elder Literature (out of *Hamlet* with which comparison were simply idle) you can put your finger on finer utterance of what most would have found un-utterable or utterable alone by music.

Alexander B. Grosart, 1871, ed., *Works in Verse and Prose Complete of Henry Vaughan, Silurist;* Essay, vol. II, p. lv

Like Herbert, and in pretty obvious imitation of him, he set himself to bend the prevailing fancy for quips and quaintnesses into sacred uses, to see that the Devil should not have all the best conceits. But he is not so uniformly successful, though he has greater depth and greater originality of thought.

George Saintsbury, 1887, *History of Elizabethan Literature,* p. 375

In Vaughan we also find a sense of the lessons Nature has for man, the harmony of the visible world with the invisible,—not only in its details,

but in its larger, its cosmic aspects, what he styles "the great chime and symphony of Nature,"—such as hardly reappear before we reach Wordsworth. Yet Vaughan, whose special aim that of rendering religious sentiment, restricted his landscape, and whose language is often obscure or fanciful, we must confess cannot compare with the largeness, the exquisite refinement, of the later poet.

Francis T. Palgrave, 1896, *Landscape in Poetry*, p. 161

Vaughan's verse is highly remarkable and original—that of a genius *manqué* but rising to gleams of inspiration. In form he is careless and unequal, but his lyric is meditative, fresh, and highly subjective, the deep and pregnant reflection of a life and experience of much sorrow. In feeling and in phrase he is often strangely modern.

Frederic Ives Carpenter, 1897, *English Lyric Poetry*, 1500-1700, Introduction, p. lix

Vaughan's position among English poets is not only high, but in some respects unique. The pervading atmosphere of mystic rapture, rather than isolated fine things, constitute the main charm of his poems; yet two, *The Retreat* and "They are all gone into the world of light," rank among the finest in the language, and, except the poems on scripture history and church festivals, there is scarcely one without some memorable thought or expression, though frequently kindling, to use his own simile, like "unanticipated sparks from a flinty ground." He not unfrequently lapses into absurdity, misled by the affectation of wit and ingenuity which beset the poetry of his time; but his taste is on the whole better than Herbert's, and much better than Crashaw's. . . . Herbert is devout according to recognised methods, Vaughan is a devout mystic. Herbert visits the spiritual world as a pious pilgrim, but Vaughan is never out of it.

Richard Garnett, 1899, *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. LVIII, p. 165

JOHN AUBREY
1626-1697

John Aubrey, antiquary (b. 1626, d. 1700), wrote *Natural History and Antiquities of the County of Surrey* (1719), *Miscellanies upon Various Subjects* (1696), and *A History of Wiltshire*, besides contributing "Minutes of Lives" of eminent men to Wood's *Athenæ Oxonienses*, and aiding Dugdale in the preparation of his *Monastican Anglicanum*. A biography

of Aubrey by Britton was published in 1845 by the Wiltshire Topographical Society, and an edition of the *Lives*, &c., was issued in 1813.

W. Davenport Adams, 1877, *Dictionary of English Literature*

SEE: *Brief Lives*, ed. Oliver Lawson Dick, 1960; Anthony Powell, *Aubrey and His Friends*, 1948, rev. 1963.

PERSONAL

His life is more remarqueable in an astrologicall respect then for any advancement of learning, having from his birth (till of late yeares) been labouring under a crowd of ill diretions: for his escapes of many dangers, in journeys both by land and water, 40 yeares. . . . I gott not strength till I was 11 or 12 yeares old; but had sicknesse of vomiting, for 12 houres every fortnight for . . . years, then about monethly, then quarterly, and at last once in halfe a yeare. About 12 it ceased. . . . He began to enter into pocket memorandum bookes philosophicall and antiquarian remarques, Anno Domini 1654, at Llanrithid. Anno 16—I began my lawe-suite on the entaile in Brecon, which lasted till . . . and it cost me 1200 *li.* Anno—I was to have married Mris K. Ryves, who died when to be married, 2000 li. +, besides counting care of her brother, 1000 *li.* per annum. . . . A strange fate that I have laboured under never in my life to enjoy one entire monethe or 6 weekes *otium* for contemplation. My studies (geometry) were on horse back, and (in) the house of office: (my father discouraged me). My head was alwaies working; never idle, and even travelling (which from 1649 till 1670 was never off my horseback) did gleane som observations, of which I have a collection in folio of 2 quiers of paper + a dust basket, some whereof are to be valued. His chiefe vertue, gratitude. . . . My fancy lay most to geometrie. If ever I had been good for anything, 'twould have been a painter, I could fancy a thing so strongly and had so cleare an idaea of it.

John Aubrey, 1669-96, *Brief Lives*, ed. Clark, vol. I, pp. 35, 39, 42, 43

He had a stronger tincture of superstition than is commonly found in men of his parts and learning. In his *Miscellanies*, among which are some things well worth the reader's notice, is a receipt against an evil tongue, which was formerly thought much worse than an evil eye. *Ob. circ.* 1700. A. Wood, whom he esteemed his friend, speaks of him as a pretender to antiquities, and as vain, credulous, and whimsical; he adds, that he was expensive to such a degree, as to be forced to sell his estate of 700 *l.* a year, and afterward to become a dependant on his friends for subsistence. There seems to be a tincture of gall in this censure of the Oxford antiquary.

James Granger, 1769-1824, *Biographical History of England*, vol. V, p. 272

Aubrey was one of those eminently good-natured men, who are very slothful in their own affairs, but spare no pains to work for a friend. He offered his help to Wood; and, when it was decided to include in Wood's book short notices of writers connected with Oxford, that help proved most valuable. Aubrey, through his family and family-connexions, and by reason of his restless goings-to-and-fro, had a wide circle of acquaintance among squires and parsons, lawyers and doctors, merchants and politicians, men of letters and persons of quality, both in town and country. He had been, until his estate was squandered, an extensive and curious buyer of books and MSS. And above all, being a good gossip, he had used to the utmost these opportunities of inquiry about men and things which had been afforded him by societies grave, like the Royal Society, and frivolous, as coffee-house gatherings and tavern clubs. The scanty excerpts, given in these volumes from letters written by him between 1668 and 1673, supply a hint of how deeply Wood's *Historia et Antiquitates Universitatis Oxoniensis,* published in 1674, was indebted to the multifarious memory and unwearying inquiries of the enthusiastic Aubrey.

Andrew Clark, 1898, ed., *Brief Lives, chiefly of Contemporaries, by Aubrey,* Introduction, vol. I, p. 1

General

Whoever expects a rational account of any fact, however trite, from Aubrey, will meet with disappointment. . . . Aubrey thought little, believed much, and confused everything.

William Gifford, 1816, ed., *The Works of Ben Jonson*

A very interesting old gentleman he is. Everybody has heard more or less about him as a gossiping old soul of the latter part of the seventeenth century, who went about collecting scraps of information and personal anecdote about notable persons of his own day and of the immediately preceding generations, for some of which scraps we are now much indebted to him. He was one of those useful individuals who, having themselves a passion for knowing what kind of noses and mouths, and what kind of eyes and hair eminent men have, and what dresses they wear, and what they like for dinner, and so on, take the trouble to jot down the information they obtain on these points for the satisfaction of posterity. Something of a taste for these minutiæ, as every one knows, is found in most persons who have any liveliness of fancy, and is almost a necessary ingredient in the character of the historian or the general man of letters; but occasionally we find the taste developed to the dimensions of a constitutional mania, leaving room for little else. In this case we have what is called "a gossip," or perhaps a collector of portraits and autographs. Boswell, on the whole, belonged to

this type, but by good luck, and his own enthusiasm for one man, his passion for gossip and anecdote became concentrated, and enabled him to be the author of the best biography in the language. Pepys, the Paul Pry of his day, was another example; less effective, because more diffuse. Aubrey, who was contemporary with Pepys, was, we fear, a lower man in the class than even Pepys.

David Masson, 1856, "John Aubrey," *British Quarterly Review*, vol. 24, p. 153

He was a "perambulator," and, in the words of one of his critics, "picked up information on the highway, and scattered it everywhere as authentic." . . . The searcher for authentic material must carefully scrutinize Aubrey's *facts;* but, with much that is doubtful, valuable information may be obtained from his pages.

Henry Coppée, 1872, *English Literature*, p. 232

His character as an antiquary has been unworthily traduced by Anthony à Wood, but fully vindicated by his recent editors and biographers. He certainly is devoid of literary talent, except as a retailer of anecdotes; his head teems with particulars which he lacks the faculty to reduce to order or combine into a whole. As a gossip, however, he is a kind of immature Boswell; and we are infinitely beholden to him for the minute but vivid traits of Bacon, Milton, Raleigh, Hobbes, and other great men preserved in his "Minutes of Lives." His *Natural History of Wilts* is full of quaint lore, and one need not believe in spirits to enjoy his *Miscellanies*. Half the charm is in the simple credulity of the narrator.

Richard Garnett, 1885, *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. I, p. 245

JOHN DRYDEN
1631-1700

Born, at Aldwinkle All Saints, Northamptonshire, 9 Aug. (?) 1631. Educated first at a school at Tichmarsh; at Westminster School, as scholar, 1640(?)-1650. Scholarship at Trinity Coll., Cambridge, 11 May 1650; matriculated, 6 July 1650; "discommuned" in July 1652, but allowed to continue residence on apology; B.A., Jan. 1654. To London, possibly as clerk to Judge Sir Gilbert Pickering; afterwards made living by literature. Married Lady Elizabeth Howard, 1 Dec. 1663. Member of Royal Soc., 26 Nov. 1662. Play, *The Wild Gallant*, performed at King's Theatre, Feb. 1663; *Rival Ladies*, 1663; *The Indian Queen* (with Sir Robert Howard), Jan. 1664; *The Indian Emperor*, 1665. At Charlton, Wilts, during

plague and fire of London. *Secret Love,* King's Theatre, March 1667; *Sir Martin Mar-all* (adapted from Molière), 1667. Position as dramatist established; contract with King's Theatre to provide three plays a year. Degree of M.A. conferred at King's request by Archbp. of Canterbury, 1668. Poet Laureate and Historiographer Royal, 1670-88. Lived in Fetter Lane, 1673-82; in Long-Acre, 1682-86. Collector of Customs in Port of London, 17 Dec. 1683. Religious controversies, 1686-88. Dramatic writing, 1690-92. Poems and translations from classics, 1693-97. Died in Gerrard St., Soho, 1 May 1700. Buried in Westminster Abbey. WORKS: *A Poem upon the Death of his late Highness Oliver* (also known as *Heroic Stanzas*), 1659 (2nd edn., same year); *Astræa Redux,* 1660; *To His Sacred Majesty, a Panegyrick on his Coronation,* 1661; *The Rival Ladies,* 1664; *Annus Mirabilis,* 1667; *The Indian Emperor,* 1667; *Of Dramatick Poesie,* 1668; *Secret Love,* 1668; *Sir Martin Mar-all,* (anon.), 1668; *The Wild Gallant,* 1669; *The Tempest* (with Davenant), 1670; *Tyrannic Love,* 1670; *An Evening's Love,* 1671; *Conquest of Granada* (2 pt.), 1672; *Marriage à la Mode,* 1673; *The Assignation,* 1673; *Amboyna,* 1673; *Notes and Observations on the Empress of Morocco* (anon.), 1674; *The State of Innocence,* 1674; *The Mall* (anon.; attributed to Dryden), 1674; *Aurengzebe,* 1676; *All for Love,* 1678; *The Kind Keeper,* 1678; *Œdipus* (with Lee), 1679; *Troilus and Cressida,* 1679; *The Spanish Friar,* 1681; *Absolom and Achitophel* (anon.), pt. i., 1681; pt. ii. (with Tate; anon.), 1682; *His Majesty's Declaration Defended* (anon.), 1681; *The Medal* (anon.), 1682; *Mac Flecknoe* (anon.), 1682; *Religio Laici,* 1682; *The Duke of Guise* (with Lee), 1683; *Vindication* of same, 1683; *Albion and Albanius,* 1685; *Threnodia Augustalis,* 1685; *Defence of Papers written by the late King* (anon.), 1686; *The Hind and Panther* (anon.), 1687; *A Song for St. Cecilia's Day,* 1687; *Britannia Rediviva,* 1688; *Don Sebastian,* 1690; *Amphitryon,* 1690; *King Arthur,* 1691; *Cleomenes,* 1692; *Eleonora,* 1692; *Love Triumphant,* 1694; *Alexander's Feast,* 1697; *Fables, Ancient and Modern, translated . . . With Original Poems,* 1700. He *translated*: Maimbourg's *History of the League,* 1684; Bohour's *Life of Xavier,* 1688; *Juvenal and Persius,* 1693; Dufresnoy's *Art of Painting,* 1695; *Virgil,* 1697; preface and two epistles in trans. of Ovid's *Epistles,* 1680; most of trans. in vols. i., ii. of *Miscellany Poems,* 1684-85; some in vols. iii., iv., 1685-94. He wrote nearly 100 prologues and epilogues; and contrib. verses or prefaces to *Lachrymæ Musarum,* 1649; Hoddesdon's *Sion and Parnassus,* 1650; Sir R. Howard's Poems, 1660; Charleton's *Chorea Gigantum,* 1663; (possibly to *Covent Garden Drollery,* 1672; and *New Court Songs and Poems,* 1672); Lee's *Alexander,* 1677; Roscommon's *Essay on Translated Verse,* 1680; a translation of Plutarch, 1683; Anne Killigrew's *Poems,* 1686; Walsh's *Dialogue concerning Women,* 1691; St. Evremond's *Miscellaneous Essays,* 1692; Sir H. Sheere's trans. of Polybius, 1693; Congreve's *Double Dealer,* 1694. COLLECTED WORKS: *Poems on Various Occasions,* ed. by Tonson, 1701; *Dramatic Works,* ed. by Tonson, 1701; ed. by Congreve (6 vol.), 1717; *Original Poems and Translations,* ed. by Tonson (2 vols.), 1742; *Poems and Fables,* 1753; *Poems,* ed. by Derrick (4 vols.), 1760; *Critical and Miscellaneous Prose Works,* ed. by Malone (4 vols.), 1800; *Works,* ed. by Scott (18 vols.), 1808; *Aldine* edn., 1854; *Globe,* edn., 1870, etc. *Life*: by Johnson, in *Lives of Poets;* by Malone, 1800; by Scott in 1808 edn. of *Works;* by Bell in *Aldine* edn.

of Works, 1854; by Christie in *Globe* edn., 1870; by Saintsbury (*English Men of Letters* series), 1881.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 88

SEE: *Works,* ed. E. N. Hooker and H. T. Swedenberg, 1956- ; *Dramatic Works,* ed. Montague Summers, 1931-32, 6 v.; *Poetical Works,* ed. George R. Noyes, 1909, rev. 1916, rev. 1950; *Poems,* ed. James Kinsley, 1958, 4 v., rev. 1962 (OSA); *The Prologues and Epilogues: A Critical Edition,* ed. William Bradford Gardner, 1951; *Essays,* ed. W. P. Ker, 1900, 2 v.; *The Critical Opinions,* ed. John M. Aden, 1963; *Letters,* ed. Charles E. Ward, 1942; *Poetry, Prose and Plays,* ed. Douglas Grant, 1952; Richard Garnett, *The Age of Dryden,* 1895; James M. Osborn, *John Dryden,* 1940; Charles E. Ward, *The Life of John Dryden,* 1961; Louis I. Bredvold, *The Intellectual Milieu of John Dryden,* 1934; Samuel Holt Monk, *John Dryden: A List of Critical Studies Published from 1895 to 1950,* 1950; William Frost, *Dryden and the Art of Translation,* 1955; Arthur W. Hoffman, *Dryden's Imagery,* 1962.

PERSONAL

I confess my chief endeavours are to delight the age in which I live. If the humour of this be for low comedy, small accidents and raillery, I will force my genius to obey it, though with more reputation I could write in verse. I know I am not fitted by nature to write comedy; I want that gaiety of humour which is required to it. My conversation is slow and dull, my humour saturnine and reserved: In short I am none of those who endeavour to break jests in company, or make repartees. So that those, who decry my comedies, do me no injury except it be in point of profit: reputation in them is the last thing to which I shall pretend.

John Dryden, 1668, *A Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poetry*

Last night, Mr. Dryden, the famous poet, coming from a coffee-house in Covent Garden, was set upon by three persons unknown to him; and so rudely by them handled, that it is said his life is in no small danger. It is thought to have been the effect of a private grudge rather than upon the too common design of unlawful gain; and unkind trespass by which not only he himself, but the commonwealth of learning may receive injury.

Contemporary Newspaper, 1679, Dec. 19th, *Maloniana*

Whereas John Dryden, Esq., was on Monday the 18th instant, at night, barbarously assaulted, and wounded in Rose-street, in Covent-garden, by divers men unknown; if any person shall make discovery of the said-offenders to the said Mr. Dryden, or to any justice of the peace, he shall not only

receive fifty pounds, which is deposited in the hands of Mr. Blanchard, goldsmith, next door to Temple-bar, for the said purpose; but if he be a principal, or an accessory, in the said fact, his Majesty is graciously pleased to promise him his pardon for the same.

London Gazette, 1679, December 18, 22

I come now from Mr. Dryden's Funeral, where we had an Ode in Horace sung, instead of David's Psalms; whence you may find that we don't think a Poet worth Christian Burial; the Pomp of the Ceremony was a kind of Rhapsody, and fitter, I think, for Hudibras than him; because the Cavalcade was mostly Burlesque; but he was an extraordinary Man, and bury'd after an extraordinary Fashion; for I believe there was never such another Burial seen; the Oration indeed was great and ingenious, worthy the Subject, and like the Author [Dr. Garth], whose Prescriptions can restore the Living, and his Pen embalm the Dead. And so much for Mr. Dryden, whose Burial was the same with his Life,—Variety, and not of a Piece. The Quality and Mob, Farce and Heroicks, the Sublime and Ridicule mixt in a Piece, great Cleopatra in a Hackney Coach.

George Farquhar, 1700, *Letter*

He was of a nature exceedingly humane and compassionate; easily forgiving injuries, and capable of a prompt and sincere reconciliation with them who had offended him. . . . His friendship, where he professed it, went much beyond his professions. . . . As his reading had been very extensive, so was he very happy in memory, tenacious of everything that he had read. He was not more possessed of knowledge than he was communicative of it. But then his communication of it was by no means pedantic, or imposed upon the conversation; but just such, and went so far, as, by the natural turns of the discourse in which he was engaged, it was necessarily promoted or required. He was extremely ready and gentle in his correction of the errors of any writer, who thought fit to consult him; and full as ready and patient to admit of the reprehension of others, in respect of his own oversight or mistakes. He was of very easy, I may say, of very pleasing access; but something slow, and, as it were, diffident in his advances to others. He had something in his nature, that abhorred intrusion into any society whatsoever. Indeed, it is to be regretted, that he was rather blamable in the other extreme; for, by that means, he was personally less known, and, consequently, his character might become liable both to misapprehensions and misrepresentations.

William Congreve, 1717, ed., *The Works of John Dryden*, Dedication

As we have sometimes great composers of music who cannot sing, we have as frequently great writers that cannot read; and though without the nicest ear no man can be master of poetical numbers, yet the best ear in the world will not always enable him to pronounce them. Of this truth Dryden, our first great master of verse and harmony, was a strong instance. When he brought his play of *Amphytrion* to the stage, I heard him give it his first reading to the actors, in which, though it is true he delivered the plain sense of every period, yet the whole was in so cold, so flat, and unaffecting a manner, that I am afraid of not being believed when I affirm it.

Colley Cibber, 1739, *An Apology for His Life*

Dryden was as disgraceful to the office [of laureat], from his character, as the poorest scribbler could have been from his verses.

Thomas Gray, 1757, *Letter to Mason*, Dec. 19

Of his petty habits or slight amusements, tradition has retained little. Of the only two men whom I have found to whom he was personally known, one told me, that at the house which he frequented, called Will's Coffee-house, the appeal upon any literary dispute was made to him: and the other related, that his armed chair, which in the winter had a settled and prescriptive place by the fire, was in the summer placed in the balcony, and that he called the two places his winter and his summer seat. This is all the intelligence which his two survivors afforded me.

Samuel Johnson, 1779-81, *Dryden, Lives of the English Poets*

Dryden's mixture of simplicity, good-nature, and good opinion of himself is here seen in a very agreeable manner. It must not be omitted that it was to this house [*Will's*] Pope was taken when a boy, by his own desire, on purpose to get a sight of the great man, which he did. According to Pope, he was plump, with a fresh color, and a down look, and not very conversible. It appears, however, that what he did say was much to the purpose; and a contemporary mentions his conversation on that account as one of the few things for which the town was desirable. He was a temperate man, though he drank with Addison a great deal more than he used to do, probably so far as to hasten his end.

Leigh Hunt, 1848, *The Town*, ch. viii

The licentiousness of Dryden's plays admits of no palliation or defence. He wrote for a licentious stage in a profligate age, and supplied, much to his own disgrace, the kind of material the vicious taste of his audiences demanded. Nor will it serve his reputation to contrast his productions in this

way with those of others. Shadwell alone transcends him in depravity. But there is some compensation for all his grossness in turning from his plays to his life, and making the contrast. The morality of his life—the practical test of his heart and his understanding—was unimpeachable. The ingenuity of slander was exhausted in assailing his principles, and exposing his person to obloquy—but the morality of his life comes pure out of the furnace. The only kind of personal indiscretion ascribed to him is that of having eaten tarts with Mrs. Reeve the actress, in the Mulberry garden.

Robert Bell, 1854, ed., *Dryden's Poems, Life*

He flung himself, like the men of his day, into the reaction against Puritanism. His life was that of a libertine, and his marriage with a woman of fashion, who was more dissolute than himself, only gave a new spur to his debaucheries. Large as was his income from the stage—and it equalled for many years the income of a country squire—he was always in debt, and forced to squeeze gifts from patrons by fulsome adulation. Like the rest of the fine gentlemen about him, he aired his Hobbism in sneers at the follies of religion and the squabbles of creeds. The grossness of his comedies rivalled that of Wycherley himself. But it is the very extravagance of his coarseness which shows how alien it was to the real temper of the man. . . . Dryden scoffs at priests and creeds, but his greater poetry is colored throughout with religion. He plays the rake, but the two pictures which he has painted with all his heart are the pictures of the honest country squire and the poor country parson. He passes his rivals in the grossness of his comedies; he flings himself recklessly into the evil about him, because it is the fashion and because it pays; but he cannot sport lightly and gayly with what is foul. He is driven, if he is coarse at all, to be brutally coarse. . . . No man denounced the opponents of the crown with more ruthless invective. No man humbled himself before the throne with more fulsome adulation. Some of this no doubt was mere flattery, but not all of it. Dryden, like his age, was conscious that new currents of feeling and opinion were sweeping him from the old moorings of mankind; but he shrank in terror from the wide ocean over whose waters he drifted. In religion he was a rationalist, a sceptic, whether he would or no; but he recoiled from the maze of "anxious thoughts" which spread before him—of thoughts

"That in endless circles roll,
Without a centre where to fix the soul."

and clung to the church that would give him, if not peace, at least quiet. In politics he was as much a rationalist as in religion, but he turned horror-struck from the sight of a "State drawn to the dregs of a democracy," and in the crisis of the popish plot he struck blindly for the crown.

John Richard Green, 1877-80, *History of the English People*

In private life a very respectable, a very amiable, and a very generous man. . . . He was, indeed, always going out of his way to do a kindness to his fellow-labourers in literature. He welcomed Wycherley with open arms, though he knew that Wycherley's success must be, to some extent, based on his own depression. Dennis, Shere, Moyle, Motteaux, and Walsh were constantly assisted by him. By his patronage Addison, then a diffident lad at Oxford, and Congreve, a timid aspirant for popular favor, came into prominence. When Southerne was smarting under the failure of his comedy, Dryden was near to cheer and condole with him. He helped Prior, and he was but ill rewarded. He did what he could for young Oldham; and when the poor fellow buried in his premature grave abilities which might have added to the riches of our literature, he dedicated a touching elegy to his memory. Lee and Garth were among his disciples; and, if he was at first blind or unjust to Otway's fine genius, he afterwards made ample amends. He gave Nell Gwynn a helping hand at the time when she sorely needed it. His letters to Mrs. Thomas still testify not only of his willingness to oblige, but the courtesy and kindliness with which he proffered his services. He was, we are told, beloved by his tenants in Northamptonshire for his liberality as a landlord. The few private letters which have been preserved to us clearly indicate that, if he was not happy with his wife, he was a forbearing and kindly husband, and his devotion to his children is touching in the extreme.

John Churton Collins, 1878-95, "Dryden," *Quarterly Review; Essays and Studies,* p. 84

Dramas

I don't think Dryden so bad a dramatic writer as you seem to do. There are as many things finely said in his plays, as almost by anybody. Beside his three best, *(All for Love, Don Sebastian,* and *The Spanish Fryar,)* there are others that are good: as, *Sir Martin Mar-all, Limberham,* and *The Conquest of Mexico*. His *Wild Gallant* was written while he was a boy, and is very bad.—All his plays are printed in the order they were written.

Alexander Pope, 1734-36, *Spence's Anecdotes,* ed. Singer, p. 128

Dryden's comedies have all the point that there is in ribaldry, and all the humour that there is in extravagance. I am sorry I can say nothing better of them. He was not at home in this kind of writing, of which he was himself conscious. His play was *horse-play*. His wit (what there is of it) is ingenious and scholarlike, rather than natural and dramatic.

William Hazlitt, 1818, *Lectures on the English Comic Writers,* p. 78

The genius of Dryden appears nowhere to so little advantage as in his tragedies; and the contrast is truly humiliating when, in a presumptuous attempt to heighten the colouring, or enrich the simplicity of Shakespeare, he bedaubs with obscenity, or deforms with rant, the genuine passion and profligacy of Antony and Cleopatra—or intrudes on the enchanted solitude of Prospero and his daughter, with the tones of world gallantry, or the caricatures of affected simplicity.

Francis, Lord Jeffrey, 1822-44, *Contributions to the Edinburgh Review,* vol. II, p. 333

His plays, his rhyming plays in particular, are admirable subjects for those who wish to study the morbid anatomy of the drama. He was utterly destitute of the power of exhibiting real human beings. Even in the far inferior talent of composing characters out of those elements into which the imperfect process of our reason can resolve them, he was very deficient. His men are not even good personifications; they are not well-assorted assemblages of qualities. Now and then, indeed, he seizes a very coarse and marked distinction; and gives up, not a likeness, but a strong caricature, in which a single peculiarity is protruded, and every thing else neglected.

Thomas Babington Macaulay, 1828, "Dryden," *Edinburgh Review; Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*

It is but too certain, on the other hand,—and I should be the last to question or dispute the certainty,—that no lover of Dryden's fame could wish to see any addition made to the already too long list of his comedies. Rather might we reasonably desire, were it possible, to strike off several of these from the roll and erase the record of their perpetration for ever. . . . A reader must be very imperfectly imbued with the spirit or skilled in the manner of his work, who imagines that the sole representative and distinctive qualities of his tragic or serious dramatic verse are to be sought or found in the resonant reverberations of amœbæan rant which roll and peal in prolonged and portentous echoes of fulminant epigram through the still dilating dialogue of his yet not undelightful heroic plays.

Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1880, "A Relic of Dryden," *The Gentleman's Magazine,* vol. 249, pp. 416, 422

The tragedies are . . . remarkable. He slipped almost at once into, and for many years persevered in, the famous "heroic" tragedy, from which, in 1678, he returned to blank verse, in the splendid though daring variation on *Antony and Cleopatra* called *All for Love,* while in it he later produced what is generally thought his dramatic masterpiece—the fine play of *Don Sebastian.* But as a blank-verse dramatist Dryden has the drawback of com-

ing into competition with his betters. We admire his work, but we do not love it; we are always thinking of another music, of a higher strain, as we read him. No one has since written in English a tragedy that will bear competition with *All for Love* and *Don Sebastian*. But when we turn from *Don Sebastian* and *All for Love* to *Hamlet* and *Othello* the result is reversed. In the "heroic" drama, on the other hand, Dryden is king, though the sceptre be too suggestive of pasteboard and the crown patched with, if not wholly composed of tinsel.

George Saintsbury, 1895, *Social England*, ed. Traill, vol. IV, p. 434

The Indian Emperor (1667)

The Indian Emperor is the first of Dryden's plays which exhibited, in a marked degree, the peculiarity of his style, and drew upon him the attention of the world. Without equalling the extravagancies of *Conquest of Granada*, and *Royal Martyr*, works produced when our author was emboldened, by public applause, to give full scope to his daring genius, the following may be considered as a model of the heroic drama.

Sir Walter Scott, 1808-21, ed., *The Works of John Dryden*, revised and corrected by George Saintsbury, 1882-93, vol. II, p. 317

The chief attraction of the play doubtless consisted neither in the cleverness and spirit of particular passages in the dialogue, nor even in the effectiveness or strong sensationalism of particular situations, but in the uniformly pleasing flow of the versification, and in the supernatural business introduced. For us, however, the main interest of this production lies in the fact that the form of versification which Dryden desired to establish in the English serious drama was here for the first time fairly on its trial; and that, without proving throughout adequate to the demands imposed upon its new-fledged strength (see *e.g.* the important first scene of act IV), it achieved a success which on the whole cannot be described as other than brilliant, although it manifestly lacked the elements of permanence.

Adolphus William Ward, 1875-99, *A History of English Dramatic Literature*, vol. III, p. 349

The Maiden Queen (1668)

After dinner, with my wife, to the King's house to see *The Maiden Queene*, a new play of Dryden's, mightily commended for the regularity of it, and the strain and wit; and, the truth is, there is a comical part done by Nell, which is Florimell, that I never can hope ever to see the like done again, by

man or woman. The King and the Duke of York were at the play. But so great performance of a comical part was never, I believe, in the world before as Nell do this, both as a mad girle, then most and best of all when she comes in like a young gallant; and hath the motions and carriage of a spark the most that ever I saw any man have. It makes me, I confess, admire her.

Samuel Pepys, 1666-67, *Diary*, March 2

The serious portion though not devoid of merit, has a blemish of which the author was well aware; but the chief merit of the play lies in the comic between the unstable Celadon and his mistress Florimel—who marry one another with their eyes perfectly open, though the lady was first courted as a "miss in a mask." If a licence in both situation and sentiment which it would not be ready to defend be frankly condoned, the fresh and enjoyable gaiety of these figures will be readily acknowledged; Florimel (to whose mirthful ways full justice was no doubt done by Nell Gwynn) is a lively and delightful type evidently drawn from real life.

Adolphus William Ward, 1875-99, *A History of English Dramatic Literature*, vol. III, pp. 350, 351

The Conquest of Granada (1672)

If, however, the reader can abstract his mind from the qualities now deemed essential to a play, and consider *Conquest of Granada* as a piece of romantic poetry there are few compositions in the English language, which convey a more lively and favourable display of the magnificence of fable, of language, and of action, proper to that style of composition. Amid the splendid ornaments of the structure we lose sight of occasional disproportion and incongruity; and, at an early age particularly, there are few poems which make a more deep impression upon the imagination than *Conquest of Granada*.

Sir Walter Scott, 1808-21, ed., *The Works of John Dryden*, revised and corrected by George Saintsbury, 1882-93, vol. IV, p. 6

Has been generally, and justly, regarded as the most prominent type of the "heroic plays" of this age. . . . If a vast quantity of rant is requisite to give expression to the "over-boiling" courage of Almanzor, and if the conception of his pride and valour are alike hyper-Achillean so that altogether he was a fit model for the caricature of Drawcansir in *The Rehearsal*—yet many of the turns of diction are extraordinarily vigorous, and the force of the impetus which enables the author to sustain the character through ten acts is simply without parallel.

Adolphus William Ward, 1875-99, *A History of English Dramatic Literature*, vol. III, p. 360

Marriage à La Mode (1673)

Marriage-à-La-Mode . . . is thoroughly amusing in its comic action, which, though occasionally as Melantha would say *risquée* to a considerable degree, is yet (as the author with some pride points out in the Epilogue) kept within certain bounds. The character of the "fair impertinent" Melantha herself, a fashionable lady and "one of those who run mad in new French words," is excellent; Congreve has hardly surpassed it; and we are already near to the height of the Restoration comedy of manners.

Adolphus William Ward, 1875-99, *A History of English Dramatic Literature,* vol. III, p. 366

It is Dryden's only original excursion into the realms of the higher comedy. For his favourite pair of lovers he here substitutes a quartette. Rhodophil and Doralice are a fashionable married pair, who, without having actually exhausted their mutual affection, are of opinion that their character is quite gone if they continue faithful to each other any longer. Rhodophil accordingly lays siege to Melantha, a young lady who is intended though he does not know this, to marry his friend Palamede, while Palamede, deeply distressed at the idea of matrimony, devotes himself to Doralice. The cross purposes of this quartette are admirably related, and we are given to understand that no harm comes of it at all. But in Doralice and Melantha Dryden has given studies of womankind quite out of his usual line. Melantha is, of course, far below Millamant, but it is not certain that that delightful creation of Congreve's genius does not owe something to her. Doralice, on the other hand, has ideas as to the philosophy of flirtation which do her no little credit. It is a thousand pities that the play is written in the language of the time, which makes it impossible to revive and difficult to read without disgust.

George Saintsbury, 1881, *Dryden* (*English Men of Letters*), p. 54

The Assignation (1673)

Bayes. I remember once, in a play of mine, I set off a scene, i'gad, beyond expectation, only with a petticoat and the belly-ache.

Smith. Pray, how was that, sir?

Bayes. Why, sir, I contrived a petticoat to be brought in upon a chair (nobody knew how), into a prince's chamber, whose father was not to see it, that came in by chance.

Johns. God's-my-life, that was a notable contrivance indeed!

Smith. Ay, but, Mr. Bayes, how could you contrive the belly-ache?

Bayes. The easiest i'the world, i'gad: I'll tell you how; I made the prince sit down upon the petticoat, no more than so, and pretended to his father that he had just then got the belly-ache; whereupon his father went out to call a physician, and his man ran away with the petticoat.

George Villiers (Duke of Buckingham), 1673, *The Rehearsal*

This play was unfortunate in the representation. It is needless, at the distance of more than a century, to investigate the grounds of the dislike of an audience, who, perhaps, could at the very time have given no good reason for their capricious condemnation of a play, not worse than many others which they received with applause. . . . The play certainly contains, in the present instance, nothing to justify them. In point of merit, *The Assignation* seems pretty much on a level with Dryden's other comedies; and certainly the spectators, who had received the blunders of Sir Martin Mar-all with such unbounded applause, might have taken some interest in those of poor Benito. Perhaps the absurd and vulgar scene, in which the prince pretends a fit of the colic, had some share in occasioning the fall of the piece.

Sir Walter Scott, 1808-21, ed., *The Works of John Dryden*, revised and corrected by George Saintsbury, 1882-93, vol. IV, p. 366

The Assignation, though written with great ease, and containing one rather humorous character (the bungling Benito) is a worthless play.

Adolphus William Ward, 1875-99, *A History of English Dramatic Literature*, vol. III, p. 366

The State of Innocence (1674)

Of the execution of this performance, I know not what to say, but that all who can estimate the greatness of Milton's images, the simplicity, the majesty, the richness of his language, the exquisite propriety of his thoughts, the fine ideal of his characters, Dryden's distorted reflection of it must appear very grotesque and ridiculous; in many parts puerile and weak; in all, losing sight of the exalted strains of poetry, and the noble conception of the original. That great creation of Milton's genius, the character of Satan, the angel of sorrow is sullied or lost. All his majestic lineaments disappear, the eye of pride, the lurid brow of woe, the greatness of his scorn, the conscious dignity of his demeanour, the feelings of one who had stood before the throne of light, (himself the morning star of heaven) all are destroyed; while only the impish cunning, the wicked, malignant, fiendish joy of the satyr and the demon is left. The simplicity of Eve is impaired, and even her purity and innocence stained; while the behaviour of Adam to his angel guest and his pertinacious arguments on the doctrines of liberty and

necessity, which it took two angels, with the assistance of old Hobbes to answer, is in strong and humiliating contrast with the exquisite truth, the delicacy and propriety of Milton's picture.

John Mitford, 1834, ed., *Poems of Dryden, Memoir,* p. liii

How all this might take with a mixed audience, we do not presume to conjecture, yet very great absurdities do sometimes take almost as well on as off the stage. . . . Suppose Booth perfectly sober in Adam, and Nell Gwynne up merely to the proper pitch of vivacity in Eve, we do not see why the opera might not have had a run during the reign of the Merry Monarch. The first sight we have of Adam is, "as newly created, laid on a bed of moss and flowers, by a rock." He rises as he begins to utter his earliest soliloquy; and we believe it as an established rule not to turn your back on, or—in playhouse phrase—not to rump your audience. In such a case, however, considerable latitude would have been conceded by both sexes to our original; and what with shades and shrubs, and, above all, the rock, an adroit actor could have had little difficulty in accommodating to his posterity their progenitor. Of Eve our first glimpse is among "trees cut out on each side, with several fruits upon them; a fountain in the midst; at the far end the prospect terminating in walks." Nelly might have worn her famous felt chapeau, broad as a coachwheel, as appropriately in that as in any other character, and contrived to amble about with sufficient decorum for those fastidious times.

John Wilson, 1845, "Dryden and Pope," *Blackwood's Magazine*

The conception of such an opera has sometimes been derided as preposterous—a derision which seems to overlook the fact that Milton was himself, in some degree, indebted to an Italian dramatic original. The piece is not wholly in rhyme, but contains some very fine passages.

George Saintsbury, 1881, *Dryden* (*English Men of Letters*), p. 56

Aurengzebe (1676)

Dryden's last and most perfect tragedy in rhyme was *Aurengzebe*. In this play, the passions are strongly depicted, the characters well discriminated, and the diction more familiar and dramatic, than in any of his preceding pieces. Hart and Mohun greatly distinguished themselves in the characters of Aurengzebe, and the old Emperor. Mrs. Marshall was admired in Nourmahul; and Kynaston has been much extolled, by Cibber, for his happy expression of the arrogant and savage fierceness in Morat. "Booth, in some

part of this character," says the same critical historian, "was too tame, from an apprehension of raising the mirth of the audience improperly."

Thomas Davies, 1784, *Dramatic Micellanies,* vol. III, p. 157

This tragedy is written in rhyme, and appears to have had great pains taken with it; parts of it are deservedly celebrated, but whatever are its beauties, its being conveyed through this vehicle is an unsurmountable objection to its keeping a place on the theatre, where otherwise it might perhaps have been deservedly a favourite.

Charles Dibdin, 1795, *A Complete History of the Stage,* vol. IV, p. 169

All for Love (1678)

It is by universal consent accounted the work in which he has admitted the fewest improprieties of style or character; but it has one fault equal to many, though rather moral than critical, that, by admitting the romantick omnipotence of Love, he has recommended, as laudable and worthy of imitation, that conduct which, through all ages, the good have censured as vicious, and the bad despised as foolish.

Samuel Johnson, 1779-81, *Dryden, Lives of the English Poets*

All for Love was the author's favourite drama;—he said, he wrote it solely to please himself, and had succeeded in his design. Yet, were it not for the interest which attaches to the names of his hero and heroine, their characters are too feebly drawn to produce those emotions which an audience at a tragedy come prepared to feel. Who can be inattentive to the loves of Marc Antony and Cleopatra? Yet, thus described, their fate in representation seldom draws a tear, or gives rise to one transport of passion in the breast of the most observing auditor. The work is, nevertheless, highly valuable. It is one of the most interesting parts of Roman and Egyptian history; and the historian—Dryden.

Mrs. Elizabeth Inchbald, 1808, "Remarks" on *All For Love,* in *The British Theatre,* ed. Elizabeth Inchbald, vol. VI

Dryden's complacency in the result is not wholly unjustified. In a sense, his tragedy is original; the character of Antony is drawn with considerable skill; the dominion which passion is capable of acquiring over a human being is, I think, exhibited quite as effectively as it is in Shakspere—but Dryden's Antony lacks elevation. His Cleopatra is comparatively uninteresting. The writing maintains a high level throughout; and the scene to which, as just noted, the author directs special attention is undoubtedly admirable. The

construction of the play is close and effective; and its general tone is sufficiently moderated, without becoming open to the charge of tameness. Within certain limits, there assuredly never was a more flexible genius than Dryden's. The tasks which he set himself, without actually failing in their performance, are many and extraordinary; in the present instance he cannot be said to rival Shakspere on his own ground, and he follows him on it without making himself guilty of servile imitation or breaking down from lack of original force. *All for Love* has been not unjustly designated by an eminent critic as "Dryden's finest play."

Adolphus William Ward, 1875-99, *A History of English Dramatic Literature,* vol. III, p. 372

To compare *All for Love* with *Antony and Cleopatra* would be to compare works which, in all that pertains to the essence of poetry and tragedy, differ not in degree merely but in kind. And yet Dryden's tragedy, even from a dramatic point of view, is, with three or four exceptions, superior to anything produced by his contemporaries. If his Cleopatra is wretched, his Antony is powerfully sketched. The altercation between Antony and Ventidius, though modelled too closely on that between Brutus and Cassius in *Julius Cæsar,* is a noble piece of dialectical rhetoric, while the scene between Cleopatra and Octavia is perhaps finer than anything which the stage had seen since Massinger.

John Churton Collins, 1878-95, "Dryden," *Quarterly Review; Essays and Studies,* p. 36

Dryden's *All for Love; or, The World Well Lost,* "written in imitation of Shakespeare's style" was its author's favourite production,—"the only play he wrote for himself"; its popularity was great; and the older critics were fond of praising its regularity and poetic harmony, though they generously recognised that it fell short of its first model in fire and originality (cf. Baker's *Bibliographia Dramatica*). It held the stage for a century, and has in all probability been acted ten times oftener than Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra.* Campbell evidenced this fact as a proof of England's neglect of Shakespeare, as a disgrace to British taste.

Israel Gollancz, 1896, ed. *Temple Shakespeare,* Preface to *Antony and Cleopatra,* p. vii

Troilus and Cressida (1679)

This Play was likewise first written by *Shakespear,* and revis'd by Mr. *Dryden,* to which he added several new Scenes, and even cultivated and improv'd what he borrow'd from the Original. The last Scene in the third Act

is a Masterpiece, and whether it be copied from *Shakespear, Fletcher,* or *Euripides,* or all of them, I think it justly deserves Commendation.

Gerard Langbaine, 1691, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets,* p. 173

Mr. Godwin has justly remarked, that the delicacy of Chaucer's ancient tale has suffered even in the hands of Shakespeare; but in those of Dryden it has undergone a far deeper deterioration. Whatever is coarse and naked in Shakespeare, has been dilated into ribaldry by the poet laureate of Charles the Second; and the character of Pandarus, in particular, is so grossly heightened, as to disgrace even the obliging class to whom that unfortunate procurer has bequeathed his name. So far as this play is to be considered as an alteration of Shakespeare, I fear it must be allowed that our author has suppressed some of his finest poetry, and exaggerated some of his worst faults.

Sir Walter Scott, 1808-21, ed., *The Works of John Dryden,* revised and corrected by George Saintsbury, 1882-93, vol. VI, p. 245

The Spanish Friar (1681)

One of the best and most popular of our poet's dramatic efforts. . . . The tragic part of *The Spanish Friar* has uncommon merit. The opening of the drama, and the picture of a besieged town in the last extremity, is deeply impressive, while the description of the noise of the night attack, and the gradual manner in which the intelligence of its success is communicated, arrests the attention, and prepares expectation for the appearance of the hero, with all the splendour which ought to attend the principal character in tragedy.

Sir Walter Scott, 1808-21, ed., *The Works of John Dryden,* revised and corrected by George Saintsbury, 1882-93, vol. VI, pp. 395, 398

A popular piece, possessed of a good deal of merit, from the technical point of view of the play-wright, but which I think has been somewhat over-rated, as far as literary excellence is concerned. The principal character is no doubt amusing, but he is heavily indebted to Falstaff on the one hand, and to Fletcher's Lopez on the other; and he reminds the reader of both his ancestors in a way which cannot but be unfavourable to himself. The play is to me most interesting because of the light it throws on Dryden's grand characteristic, the consummate craftsmanship with which he could throw himself into the popular feeling of the hour. This "Protestant play" is perhaps his most notable achievement of the kind in drama, and it may be admitted that some other achievements of the same kind are less creditable.

George Saintsbury, 1881, *Dryden* (*English Men of Letters*), p. 60

Don Sebastian (1690)

Is commonly esteemed either the first or second of his dramatick performances. It is too long to be all acted, and has many characters and many incidents; and though it is not without sallies of frantick dignity, and more noise than meaning, yet as it makes approaches to the possibilities of real life, and has some sentiments which leave a strong impression, it continued long to attract attention. Amidst the distresses of princes, and the vicissitudes of empire, are inserted several scenes which the writer intended for comick; but which, I suppose, that age did not much commend, and this would not endure. There are, however, passages of excellence universally acknowledged; the dispute and the reconciliation of Dorax and Sebastian has always been admired.

Samuel Johnson, 1779-81, *Dryden, Lives of the English Poets*

Dorax is indeed the *chef-d'œuvre* of Dryden's tragic characters, and perhaps the only one, in which he has applied his great knowledge of human kind to actual delineation. It is highly dramatic, because formed of those complex feelings, which may readily lead either to virtue or vice, and which the poet can manage, so as to surprise the spectator, without transgressing consistency. The Zanga of Young, a part of great theatrical effect, has been compounded of this character and of that of Iago. But *Don Sebastian* is as imperfect as all plays must be, in which a single personage is thrown forward in too strong relief for the rest. The language is full of that rant which characterized Dryden's earlier tragedies, and to which a natural predilection seems, after some interval, to have brought him back.

Henry Hallam, 1808, "Scott's Edition of Dryden," *Edinburgh Review*, vol. 13, p. 125

If we except Otway's two tragedies, *Don Sebastian* is beyond comparison the finest tragedy the English stage had seen since Fletcher had passed away. The celebrated scene in the fourth act between Dorax and Sebastian is one of the gems of the English drama.

John Churton Collins, 1878-95, "Dryden," *Quarterly Review; Essays and Studies*, p. 66

Heroic Stanzas (1659)

That these stanzas should have made him a name as a poet does not appear surprising when we compare them with Waller's verses on the same occasion. Dryden took some time to consider them, and was impossible that they should not give an impression of his intellectual strength. Donne was his model; it is obvious that both his ear and his imagination were saturated

with Donne's elegiac strains when he wrote; yet when we look beneath the surface, we find unmistakable traces that the pupil was not without decided theories that ran counter to the practice of the master. It is plainly not by accident that each stanza contains one clear-cut brilliant point. The poem is an academic exercise, and it seems to be animated by an under-current of strong contumacious protest against the irregularities tolerated by the authorities.

William Minto, 1877, *Encyclopædia Britannica,* Ninth edition, vol. VII

There were not three poets then living who could have written the best lines of the *Heroic Stanzas,* and what is more, those lines were not in the particular manner of either of the poets who, as far as general poetical merit goes, might have written them.

George Saintsbury, 1881, *Dryden* (*English Men of Letters*), p. 28

Annus Mirabilis (1667)

I am very well pleased this night with reading a poem I brought home with me last night from Westminster Hall, of Dryden's upon the present war; a very good poem.

Samuel Pepys, 1666-67, *Diary,* Feb. 2

This poem is written with great diligence, yet does not fully answer the expectation raised by such subjects and such a writer. With the stanza of Davenant he has sometimes his vein of parenthesis, and incidental disquisition, and stops his narrative for a wise remark. The general fault is, that he affords more sentiment than description, and does not so much impress scenes upon the fancy, as deduce consequences and make comparisons.

Samuel Johnson, 1779-81, *Dryden, Lives of the English Poets*

The *Annus Mirabilis* shows great command of expression, and a fine ear for heroic rhyme. Here its merits end. Not only has it no claim to be called poetry; but it seems to be the work of a man who could never, by any possibility, write poetry. Its affected similes are the best part of it. Gaudy weeds present a more encouraging spectacle than utter barrenness. There is scarcely a single stanza in this long work, to which the imagination seems to have contributed any thing. It is produced, not by creation, but by construction. It is made up, not of pictures, but of inferences.

Thomas Babington Macaulay, 1828, "Dryden," *Edinburgh Review; Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*

Both in its merits and in its defects it bears a close resemblance to the *Pharsalia* of Lucan. It is enriched with some fine touches of natural description, and, if the moonlight night at sea and the simile of the bees were borrowed from Virgil, the pictures of the dying hare, of the baffled falcon, of the herded beasts lying on the dewy grass, and of the moon "blunting its crescent on the edge of day," show that Dryden had the eye of an artist as he wandered about the park at Charlton. The work is disfigured with many "metaphysical" extravagances, but the King's prayer, as well as the concluding stanzas, must rank among the most majestic passages in English rhetorical poetry.

John Churton Collins, 1878-95, "Dryden,"
Quarterly Review; Essays and Studies, p. 29

The fire and spirit of *Annus Mirabilis* are nothing short of amazing, when the difficulties which beset the author (though partly by his own choosing) are remembered. There was, first, the difficulty of his subject, which, as a perusal of the poem cannot fail to reveal the most unsuspecting reader, was by no means made up altogether of materials for congratulation. Yet *Annus Mirabilis* must really have "done good" to the public; even at the present day it agreeably warms the John Bull sentiment, compounded of patriotism and prejudice, in the corner of an Englishman's heart.

Adolphus William Ward, 1880, *English Poets*,
ed. Ward, vol. II, p. 440

Dryden's poem is distinguished by masterly execution and dignity of style, but it has been justly pointed out that the subject lacks variety. Indeed, the feeling with which we read it is not wholly that of pleasure; but some admiration must be given to the viguor of the writer and to his skilful manipulation of a difficult stanza. A curious feature of the poem is the pious prayer which Charles is made to offer up for his afflicted subjects, and the answer it received.

John Dennis, 1883, *Heroes of Literature*, p. 161

Religio Laici (1682)

Is almost the only work of Dryden which can be considered as a voluntary effusion; in this, therefore, it might be hoped, that the full effulgence of his genius would be found. But unhappily the subject is rather argumentative than poetical; he intended only a specimen of metrical disputation:

> And this unpolish'd rugged verse I chose,
> As fittest for discourse, and nearest prose.

This, however, is a composition of great excellence in its kind, in which the familiar is very improperly diversified with the solemn, and the grave with

the humorous; in which metre has neither weakened the force, nor clouded the perspicuity of argument; nor will it be easy to find another example equally happy in this middle kind of writing, which, though prosaick in some parts, rises to high poetry in others, and neither towers to the skies, nor creeps along the ground.

Samuel Johnson, 1779-81, *Dryden, Lives of the English Poets*

Took a walk, with Wordsworth, under Loughrigg. His conversation has been remarkably agreeable. To-day he talked of Poetry. He held Pope to be a greater poet than Dryden; but Dryden to have most talent, and the strongest understanding. Landor once said to me: "Nothing was ever written in hymn equal to the beginning of Dryden's *Religio Laici*.

Henry Crabb Robinson, 1842, *Diary*, Jan. 6

In one respect this takes the highest place among the works of Dryden, for it is the most perfect example he has given of that reasoning in rhyme of which he was so great a master. There is not and could not be any originality in the reasonings themselves, but Pope's famous couplet was never so finely illustrated, except by Pope himself:

"True wit is nature to advantage drest;
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well exprest."

At the same time the poetry hardly rises to the height which the theme might have justified. There is little to captivate or astonish, but perpetual admiration attends upon the masterly conduct of the argument, and the ease with which dry and difficult propositions melt and glide in harmonious verse.

Richard Garnett, 1895, *The Age of Dryden*, p. 27

The Hind and the Panther (1687)

If he did it well or handsomely, he might deserve some pardon; but alas! how ridiculously doth he appear in print for any religion, who hath made it his business to laugh at all! How can he stand up for any mode of worship, who hath been accustomed to bite, and spit his venom against the very name thereof?

Tom Brown, 1687, *Four Letters*

As if by being Laureat, he were as Infallible as St. *Peter's* Successor; and had as large a Despotick Power as Pope *Stephanus* the Sixth to damn his Predecessors; he has assaulted with all the Bitterness imaginable not only the Church of *England*, but also ridicul'd the several Professions of the *Lutherans, Calvinists, Socinians, Presbyterians, Hugonots, Anabaptists, Independents, Quakers, &c.*, tho' I must observe by the way, that some

people among the Perswasions here mention'd might justly have expected better usage from him on Account of old Acquaintance in the Year 1659.

Gerard Langbaine, 1691, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, p. 139

The verse in which these doctrines, polemical and political, are delivered, is among the finest specimens of the English heroic stanza. The introductory verses, in particular, are lofty and dignified in the highest degree: as are those in which the splendour and majesty of the Church of Rome are set forth, in all the glowing colours of rich imagery and magnificent language. But the same praise extends to the versification of the whole poem. It never falls, never becomes rugged; rises with the dignified strain of the poetry; sinks into quaint familiarity, where sarcasm and humour are employed; and winds through all the mazes of theological argument without becoming either obscure or prosaic.

Sir Walter Scott, 1808-21, ed., *Works of Dryden*, revised and corrected by George Saintsbury, 1882-93, vol. X, p. 101

Is every way an extraordinary poem. . . . The first lines in *The Hind and Panther* are justly reputed among the most musical in our language; and perhaps we observe their rhythm the better because it does not gain much by the sense. . . . The wit in *The Hind and Panther* is sharp, ready, and pleasant; the reasoning is sometimes admirably close and strong; it is the energy of Bossuet in verse. I do not know that the main argument of the Roman Church could be better stated; all that has been well said for tradition and authority, all that serves to expose the inconsistencies of a vacillating Protestantism, is in the Hind's mouth.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, pt. iv, ch. v, par. 41, 42, 43

Criticism of this kind, involving, as it does, inquiry into the heart and the conscience, is always attended with a measure of uncertainty. But it appears to me that Dryden's subsequent career attests the sincerity of his change of faith. The internal evidence of *The Hind and Panther* cannot be disregarded. *The Hind and Panther* is the work of an honest Roman Catholic. Whatever might have been the original and exciting cause of the change, there can be no doubt that, while engaged in the composition of that remarkable poem, the writer earnestly believed that he had done his duty. He educated his younger sons in the Catholic faith: spite of solicitation, spite of menace, he never wavered in his allegiance. He had made his choice, and he did not flinch. He was true to his religion and to his king.

John Skelton, 1865-83, "John Dryden," *Fraser's Magazine; Essays in History and Biography*, p. 150

Dryden's conversion to Romanism has been commonly taken for granted as insincere, and has therefore left an abiding stain on his character, though the other mud thrown at him by angry opponents or rivals brushed off so soon as it was dry. But I think his change of faith susceptible of several explanations, none of them in any way discreditable to him. Where Church and State are habitually associated, it is natural that minds even of a high order should unconsciously come to regard religion as only a subtler mode of police. Dryden, conservative by nature, had discovered before Joseph de Maistre, that Protestantism, so long as it justified its name by continuing to be an active principle, was the abettor of Republicanism, perhaps the vanguard of Anarchy. I think this is hinted in more than one passage in his preface to *The Hind and Panther*. He may very well have preferred Romanism because of its elder claim to authority in all matters of doctrine, but I think he had a deeper reason in the constitution of his own mind. That he was "naturally inclined to scepticism in philosophy," he tells us of himself in the preface to the *Religio Laici;* but he was a sceptic with an imaginative side, and in such characters scepticism and superstition play into each other's hands. . . . Have we forgotten Montaigne's votive offerings at the shrine of Loreto?

James Russell Lowell, 1868-90, *Dryden, Prose Works,* Riverside ed., vol. III, pp. 186, 187

Alexander's Feast (1697)

I am writing a song for St. Cecilia's feast, who, you know, is the patroness of music. This is troublesome, and no way beneficial; but I could not deny the stewards, who came in a body to my house to desire that kindness, one of them being Mr. Bridgeman, whose parents are your mother's friends.

John Dryden, 1697, *Letter to his Son*

One composition must however be distinguished. The ode to "St. Cecilia's Day," perhaps the last effort of his poetry, has been always considered as exhibiting the highest flight of fancy, and the exactest nicety of art. This is allowed to stand without a rival. If indeed there is any excellence beyond it in some other of Dryden's works, that excellence must be found.

Samuel Johnson, 1779-81, *Dryden, Lives of the English Poets*

Dryden's wonderful ode; which is of itself worth all that Pindar has written, as a large diamond is worth a vast heap of gold, because that master-piece is a dithyrambic poem, not a lyric one. And that as well for its want of regularity, as for its subject, which, being perfectly convivial as its title

speaks, falls with much propriety into that class which the ancients called dithyrambic, and which were most commonly sacred to Bacchus.

John (Robert Heron), Pinkerton, 1785, *Letters of Literature*, p. 34

Dryden's *Alexander's Feast* is a magnificent composition, and has high poetical beauties; but to a refined judgment there is something intrinsically unpoetical in the end to which it is devoted, the praises of revel and sensuality. It corresponds to a process of clever reasoning erected on an untrue foundation—the one is a fallacy, the other is out of taste.

John Henry Newman, 1829-71, "Poetry, with reference to Aristotle's Poetics"; *Essays Critical and Historical*, vol. I, p. 22

Dryden's *Alexander's Feast* is undoubtedly the lyric master-piece of English poetry, in respect to versification; exemplifying as it does, all the capabilities of our language in the use of iambics, trochees, anapæsts, dactyls, and spondees.

James Montgomery, 1833, *Lectures on General Literature, Poetry, etc.*, p. 175

Virgil (1697)

I am informed Mr. Dryden is now translating of Virgil; and although I must own it is a fault to forestall or anticipate the praise of a man in his labours, yet, big with the greatness of the work and the vast capacity of the author, I cannot here forbear saying, that Mr. Dryden, in the translating of Virgil, will of a certain make Maro speak better than ever Maro thought.

Edward Howard, 1695, *Essay on Pastoral, and Elegy on Queen Mary, Poem*

Dryden, in a long harangue, soothed up the good ancient; called him father, and, by a large deduction of genealogies, made it plainly appear that they were nearly related. Then he humbly proposed an exchange of armour, as a lasting mark of hospitality between them. Virgil consented, (for the goddess Diffidence came unseen, and cast a mist before his eyes,) though his was of gold, and cost a hundred beeves, the other's but of rusty iron. However, this glittering armour became the modern yet worse than his own. Then they agreed to exchange horses; but, when it came to the trial, Dryden was afraid, and utterly unable to mount.

Jonathan Swift, 1704, *Battle of the Books*

Had he translated the whole work, I would no more have attempted Homer after him than Virgil: his version of whom (notwithstanding some human errors) is the most noble and spirited translation I know in any language.

Alexander Pope, 1715, *Homer's Iliad*, Preface

His Virgil abounds in lines and couplets of the most perfect beauty; but these are mixed with others of a different stamp: nor can they who judge of the original by this translation, ever receive any tolerable idea of that uniform magnificence of sound and language, that exquisite choice of words and figures, and that sweet pathos of expression and of sentiment, which characterise the Mauntan Poet.

James Beattie, 1776-9, *Essays on Poetry and Music*, p. 16, note

That his cannot be the language of imagination, must have necessarily followed from this,—that there is not a single image from nature in the whole body of his works; and in his translation from Virgil, wherever Virgil can be fairly said to have his *eye* upon his object, Dryden always spoils the passage.

William Wordsworth, 1805, *Letter to Scott, Scott's Life*, ed. Lockhart, vol. I, p. 218

His Virgil is, in my apprehension, the least successful of his chief works. Lines of consummate excellence are frequently shot, like threads of gold, through the web; but the general texture is of an ordinary material. Dryden was little fitted for a translator of Virgil: his mind was more rapid and vehement than that of his original, but by far less elegant and judicious. This translation seems to have been made in haste; it is more negligent than any of his own poetry; and the style is often almost studiously, and, as it were, spitefully vulgar.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, pt. iv, ch. v, par. 46

He had dashed it off with the utmost freedom and fire, and no work was ever more thoroughly identified with its translator. . . . A great and almost national interest was felt in the undertaking, such as would be felt now, were it announced that Tennyson was engaged in a translation of Goethe.

George Gilfillan, 1855, ed., *Poetical Works of John Dryden, Life*, vol. I, p. xxii

Marred by coarseness, marred by miserable inequalities, marred by errors of ignorance and errors of inadvertancy, it is still a noble achievement. It is a work instinct with genius, but it is instinct not with the placid and majestic genius of the most patient of artists, but with the impetuous energy of the prince of English rhetorical poets. The tender grace, the pathetic cadences, the subtle verbal mechanism of the most exquisite poet of antiquity will be sought in vain in its vehement and facile diction, in the rushing and somewhat turbid torrent of its narrative. It is indeed one of those

works which will never cease to offend the taste and will never fail to captivate the attention.

John Churton Collins, 1878-95, "Dryden," *Quarterly Review; Essays and Studies*, p. 70

Fables (1699)

I Doe hereby promise to pay John Dryden, Esquire, or order, on the 25th of March, 1699, the sume of two hundred and fifty guineas, in consideration of ten thousand verses, which the said John Dryden, Esquire, is to deliver to me Jacob Tonson, when finished, whereof seaven thousand five hundred verses, more or lesse, are already in the said Jacob Tonson's possession. And I do hereby further promise and engage my selfe to make up the said sume of two hundred and fifty guineas, three hundred pounds sterling, to the said John Dryden, Esquire, his executors, administrators, or assigns, att the beginning of the second impression of the said ten thousand verses. In witness whereof, I have hereunto sett my hand and seal this twentieth day of March, 1698-9.

Jacob Tonson, 1698-9, *Agreement Concerning The Fables*

His alterations from Chaucer and Boccaccio show a greater knowledge of the taste of his readers, and power of pleasing them, than acquaintance with the genius of his authors. He ekes out the lameness of the verse in the former, and breaks the force of passion in both. The *Tancred and Sigismunda* is the only general exception, in which, I think, he has fully retained, if not improved upon, the impassioned declamation of the original. The *Honoria* has none of the bewildered, dreary, preternatural effect of Boccaccio's story. Nor has the *Flower and the Leaf* any thing of the enchanting simplicity and concentrated feeling of Chaucer's romantic fiction.

William Hazlitt, 1818, *Lectures on the English Poets*, Lecture iv

No narrative poems in the language have been more generally admired or read.

Robert Chambers, 1876, *Cyclopædia of English Literature*, ed. Carruthers

His *Fables* . . . are deservedly placed at the head of his works. It is of course impossible that they should exhibit the same intellectual strength as his argumentative and satirical poems, but this is more than compensated by their superior attractiveness, the additional scope offered for the display of art, and their comparative freedom from everything that can repel.

Richard Garnett, 1895, *The Age of Dryden*, p. 14

They sin from coarseness, but in style, in magnificent march of verse, in intellectual but not imaginative fire, in ease but not in grace, they are excellent.

Stopford A. Brooke, 1896, *English Literature,* p. 177

Satires

When I name DRYDEN, I comprehend every varied excellence of *our* poetry. In harmony, strength, modulation, rhythm, energy, he first displayed the full power of the English language. . . . He was the first poet who brought to perfection, what I would term, "The Allegory of Satire." . . . It was the peculiar happiness of Dryden to give an eternal sense and interest to subjects which are transitory. He placed his scene on the ground of actual history.

Thomas James Mathias, 1798, *Pursuits of Literature,* Introductory Letter, pp. 34, 35

Dryden occupies the foremost place in the foremost ranks of English Didactic Writers. . . . His Satire is appalling, and tremendous; and not the less so, for its extreme polish and splendour. It excites our indignation against its objects, not only on account of the follies, or faults, which it imputes to them, but also on account of their writhing beneath the infliction of so splendid a weapon. We forgot the offender in the awfulness and majesty of the power by which he is crushed. Instead of shrinking at the horror of the carnage, we are lost in admiration at the brilliancy of the victory. Like the lightning of heaven, the Satire of Dryden throws a splendour around the objects which it destroys. He has immortalised the persons whom he branded with infamy and contempt; for who would have remembered Shadwell, if he had not been handed down to everlasting fame as Mac Flecnoe?

Henry Neele, 1827-29, *Lectures on English Poetry*

But there is a difference between a spontaneous effusion of rage and hate, and a cold and malignant preparation of bitterness. The satire which indignation makes will always be the most sympathized with; and the genial man, like Dryden, the most admired. Dryden professes to prefer Juvenal to Horace for his own reading; and this I can quite understand. There are the marks of personal heat in old Dryden's Satires, and generally a blending of humor and passion, a qualification of scorn by fun, which show you that it was natural for him to hold that opinion. In him, as in Juvenal and some others, the personality and the savageness are accompanied by traces of the satirist's other private qualities—his wisdom, fancy, homeliness. The rod with which he castigates has the leaves and blossoms still

sticking to it. The goodness of his nature shows itself when he is angry, even; consequently you sympathize with him, and do not pity his victims so much.

James Hannay, 1854, *Satire and Satirists,* p. 126

There are passages of Dryden's satires in which every couplet has not only the force but the actual sound of a slap in the face. The rapidity of movement from one couplet to the other is another remarkable characteristic. Even Pope, master as he was of verse, often fell into the fault of isolating his couplets too much, as if he expected applause between each, and wished to give time for it. Dryden's verse, on the other hand, strides along with a careless Olympian motion, as if the writer were looking at his victims rather with a kind of good-humoured scorn than with any elaborate triumph.

George Saintsbury, 1881, *Dryden* (*English Men of Letters*), p. 76

Absalom and Achitophel (1681-82)

The true end of satire is the amendment of vices by correction. And he who writes honestly is no more an enemy to the offender than the physician to the patient, when he prescribes harsh remedies to an inveterate disease; for those are only in order to prevent the chirurgeon's work of an *Ense rescindendum,* which I wish not to my very enemies. To conclude all; if the body politic have any analogy to the natural, in my weak judgment, an act of oblivion were as necessary in a hot distempered state as an opiate would be in a raging fever.

John Dryden, 1681, *Absalom and Achitophel,* To the Reader

This natural pride and ambition of the soul is very much gratified in the reading of a fable; for, in writings of this kind the reader comes in for half of the performance; every thing appears to him like a discovery of his own. . . . For this reason the *Absalom and Achitophel* was one of the most popular poems that ever apeared in English.

Joseph Addison, 1712, *Spectator,* No. 512, Oct. 17

This poem is said to be one of the most perfect allegorical pieces that our language has produced. It is carried on through the whole with equal strength and propriety. The veil is no where laid aside. There is a just similarity in the characters, which are exactly pourtrayed; the lineaments are well copied; the colouring is lively; the groupings show the hand of a master, and may serve to convince us, that Mr. Dryden knew his own

power when he asserted, that he found it easier to write severely than gently.

Samuel Derrick, 1760, *Miscellaneous Works of John Dryden,* with Explanatory Notes and Observations

You will find this a good gage or criterion of genius,—whether it progresses and evolves, or only spins upon itself. Take Dryden's Achitophel and Zimri,—Shaftesbury and Buckingham; every line adds to or modifies the character, which is, as it were, a-building up to the very last verse; whereas, in Pope's Timon, &c., the first two or three couplets contain all the pith of the character, and the twenty or thirty lines that follow are so much evidence or proof of overt acts of jealousy, or pride, or whatever it may be that is satirised.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1832, *Table Talk,* ed. Ashe, Aug. 6, p. 177

The greatest of his satires is *Absalom and Achitophel,*— that work in which his powers become fully known in the world, and which, as many think, he never surpassed. The admirable fitness of the English Couplet for satire had never been shown before; in less skilful hands it had been ineffective. He does not frequently, in his poem, carry the sense beyond the second line, which except when skilfully contrived, as it often is by himself, is apt to enfeeble the emphasis; his triplets are less numerous than usual, but energetic. The spontaneous ease of expression, the rapid transitions, the general elasticity and movement, have never been excelled. It is superfluous to praise the discrimination and vivacity of the chief characters.

Henry Hallam, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe,* pt. iv, ch. v, par. 39

In one respect this poem stands alone in literature. A party pamphlet dedicated to the hour, it is yet immortal. No poem in our language is so interpenetrated with contemporary allusion, with contemporary portraiture, with contemporary point, yet no poem in our language has been more enjoyed by succeeding generations of readers. Scores of intelligent men who know by heart the characters of Zimri and Achitophel are content to remain in ignorance of the political careers of Buckingham and Shaftesbury. The speech in which Achitophel incites his faltering disciple has been admired and recited by hundreds who have been blind to its historical fidelity and to its subtle personalities.

John Churton Collins, 1878-95, "Dryden," *Quarterly Review; Essays and Studies,* p. 43

The Medal (1682)

The Medal, written upon the same principles with *Absalom and Achitophel,* but upon a narrower plan, gives less pleasure, though it discovers equal abilities in the writer. The superstructure cannot extend beyond the foundation; a single character or incident cannot furnish as many ideas, as a series of events, or multiplicity of agents. This poem therefore, since time has left it to itself, is not much read, nor perhaps generally understood; yet it abounds with touches both of humorous and serious satire.

Samuel Johnson, 1779-81, *Dryden, Lives of the English Poets*

In *The Medal* he hurled at Shaftesbury and his party a phillippic which, for rancorous abuse, for lofty and uncompromising scorn, for coarse, scathing, ruthless denunciation, couched in diction which now swells to the declamatory grandeur of Juvenal and now sinks to the sordid vulgarity of Swift, has no parallel in our literature. The former attack, indeed, was mercy to this new outburst. To find anything approaching to it in severity and skill we must go back to Claudian's savage onslaught on the Achitophel of the fourth century, or forward to Akenside's diatribe against Pulteney.

John Churton Collins, 1878-95, *Dryden, Quarterly Review; Essays and Studies,* p. 45

Mac Flecknoe (1682)

The severity of this satire, and the excellence of its versification, give it a distinguished rank in this species of composition. At present, an ordinary reader would scarcely suppose that Shadwell, who is here meant by Mac Flecknoe, was worth being chastised; and that Dryden, descending to such game, was like an eagle stooping to catch flies. The truth however is, Shadwell at one time held divided reputation with this great poet. Every age produces its fashionable dunces, who, by following the transcient topic or humour of the day, supply talkative ignorance with materials for conversation.

Oliver Goldsmith, 1767, *The Beauties of English Poetry*

Mac-Flecknoe must be allowed to be one of the keenest satires in the English language. It is what Dryden has elsewhere termed a Varronian satire; that is, as he seems to use the phrase, one in which the author is not contented with general sarcasm upon the object of attack, but where he has woven his piece into a sort of imaginary story, or scene, in which he introduces the person whom he ridicules as a principal actor. The position in which Dryden has placed Shadwell is the most mortifying to literary vanity which can possibly be imagined, and is hardly excelled by the device of

Pope in *The Dunciad,* who has obviously followed the steps of his predecessor.

Sir Walter Scott, 1808-21, ed., *The Works of John Dryden,* revised and corrected by George Saintsbury, 1882-93, vol. X, p. 431

This most happily executed retort upon a by no means despicable antagonist has a double claim to immortality:—its own delightful execution, and the fact that this attempt to extinguish a single Dunce suggested to Pope the heroic idea of annihilating the whole tribe.

Adolphus William Ward, 1880, *English Poets,* ed. Ward, vol. II, p. 442

Prose

Dryden may be properly considered as the father of English criticism, as the writer who first taught us to determine upon principles the merit of composition. Of our former poets, the greatest dramatist wrote without rules, conducted through life and nature by a genius that rarely misled, and rarely deserted him. Of the rest, those who knew the laws of propriety had neglected to teach them.

Samuel Johnson, 1779-81, *Dryden, Lives of the English Poets*

If a new edition be wanted of Dryden's critical prose works, I know of nothing better worth republishing. The matter is for the most part excellent: the manner incomparable throughout. There cannot be a better antidote against our modern innovations in style than his compositions—perspicuous, graceful, elegant, humorous and easy.

Lord Claremont, 1794, *Letter to Edmund Malone,* ed. Prior, p. 251

It would be superfluous to echo the praise of Dryden's prose style, which is in every one's mouth. Perhaps it may not be equally so, to suggest a limitation of it. Its excellence is an ease and apparent negligence of phrase, which shows, as it were, a powerful mind *en deshabille,* and free from the fetters of study. . . . We cannot think the style of Dryden adapted to an historical, much less to a didactic work. We should, indeed, strongly recommend the study of it to those engaged in such compositions, so far as to relieve, in some degree, by its variety and copiousness of English idiom, that stiffness and monotony, which habits of precise and laborious thinking, especially upon abstract subjects, are very apt to engender.

Henry Hallam, 1808, "Scott's Edition of Dryden," *Edinburgh Review,* vol. 13, p. 133

Dryden then has the merit of converting this corruption and dissolution of our old language into a new birth and renovation. And not only must we thank him for making the best of the inevitable circumstances and tendencies of the time, but also praise him absolutely for definitely improving our language. It is true that he sacrificed a great deal of the old beauty of English writing, but that sacrifice was inevitable; he retained all that it was practicable to save, and he added at the same time all the new excellence of which the time was capable. You may call it, if you please, a democratic movement in the language. It was easier henceforth both to write and to read. To understand written English, it was not necessary first to understand Latin; and yet written English was little less instructive than it had been, or if it was less elevating, it was on the other hand more refining.

Arthur Hugh Clough, 1852? "On Dryden's English,"
Prose Remains, p. 327

English prose is indebted to Dryden for having freed it from the cloister of pedantry. He, more than any other single writer, contributed, as well by precept as example, to give it suppleness of movement and the easier air of the modern world. His own style, juicy with proverbial phrases, has that familiar dignity, so hard to attain, perhaps unattainable except by one who, like Dryden, feels that his position is assured. Charles Cotton is as easy, but not so elegant; Walton as familiar, but not so flowing; Swift as idiomatic, but not so elevated; Burke more splendid, but not so equally luminous.

James Russell Lowell, 1868-90, *Dryden, Prose Works,*
Riverside ed., vol. III, p. 129

We feel in him the stress of modern society, the shiftings of modern thought, the modern spirit of criticism which tries, in the balance of reasoning opinion and the recognized canons of excellence, himself and his performances in one scale, and all sorts of other writers and their performances in another, not perhaps too equitably poised. . . . In his time criticism was almost a novelty in England. His method was trenchant, decisive, and broad, his perceptions fresh and vigorous, his grasp solid and firm; he said many fine things finely; and his writings of this class had what they merited, a great deal of influence.

William Michael Rossetti, 1878, *Lives of Famous Poets,*
pp. 91, 96

Respect for Dryden as a critic has been steadily growing during the last two centuries; what he wrote of Chaucer may with a modification be applied to himself—"He is a fountain of good sense." He was so open minded and

progressive all through his life that the study of his criticism becomes especially interesting as an illustration of literary development. His mind was vigorous rather than subtle, and his sympathies were with the Restoration school, at whose head he stands; yet he manifests no little catholicity and sensitiveness. He is moreover one of the most agreeable prose authors in our literature, writing "prose such as we would all gladly use if we only knew how"—easy and clear, entirely unostentatious, with the pleasantest touches of familiarity, and yet not lacking in seriousness and a gentleman's dignity.

Edward T. McLaughlin, 1893, *Literary Criticism for Students,* p. 16

No later prose writer can approach him in strength, freedom, and harmony of expression. In reading him, when at his best, we are reminded of his own description of Absalom:

"Whate'er he did, was done with so much ease,
In him alone 'twas natural to please."

The most skilful critic finds it sometimes hard to discriminate between the style of Addison and Steele; Johnson's style had many imitators; but no man could imitate the style of Dryden. Of no writer can it be more truly said, *Le style c'est l'homme.* Like the Socrates of Plato he runs before his argument as a ship under sail, and whatever be his subject of the moment, he suffuses it with all the glow and colour of his rich vocabulary. The coarse immorality of Charles II's Court, as he paints it, takes an air of grace and refinement. A few strokes of unequalled vigour place before us, with perfect discrimination, the varied characters of Shakespeare, Fletcher, and Jonson. Even in the midst of his servility he seems to be sustained by a sense of inward greatness, which allows him to speak to his readers with self-respect. Nothing can surpass the dignity of his attitude before Collier; his haughty disdain of Buckingham and the authors of *The Rehearsal;* his pathetic reference to his old age in the "Postscript to the Æneis."

W. J. Courthope, 1894, *English Prose,* ed. Craik, vol. III, p. 146

Dryden is master of comparative criticism: he has something of the historical method; he is unrivalled in the art of seizing the distinctive qualities of his author and of setting them before us with the lightest touch. His very style, so pointed yet so easy, is enough in itself to mark the gulf that lies beween the age of Elizabeth and the age of the Restoration. All the Elizabethan critics, Sidney himself hardly excepted, bore some trace of the schoolmaster. Dryden was the first to meet his readers entirely as an equal, and talk to them as a friend with friends. It is Dryden, and not Sainte-

Beuve, who is the true father of the literary *causerie;* and he still remains its unequalled master.

C. E. Vaughan, 1896, *English Literary Criticism*, p. xxvii

The separate, positive sentences of Dryden, are of small account in his work as critic. His virtue is that, in a time when literature was pestered and cramped with formulas, he found it impossible to write otherwise than freely. He is skeptical, tentative, disengaged, where most of his contemporaries, and most of his successors for a hundred years, are pledged to certain dogmas and principles.

W. P. Ker, 1900, ed., *Essays of John Dryden,* vol. I, p. xv

General

You do live in as much ignorance and darkness as you did in the womb: your writings are like a Jack-of-all-trade's shop; they have a variety, but nothing of value; and if thou art not the dullest plant-animal that ever the earth produced, all that I have conversed with are strangely mistaken in thee.

Martin Clifford, 1672-87, *Notes upon Mr. Dryden's Poems,* First Letter

I cannot pass by that admirable English poet, without endeavouring to make his country sensible of the obligations they have to his Muse. Whether they consider the flowing grace of his versification, the vigorous sallies of his fancy, or the peculiar delicacy of his periods, they all discover excellences never to be enough admired. If they trace him from the first productions of his youth to the last performances of his age, they will find that as the tyranny of rhyme never imposed on the perspicuity of sense, so a languid sense never wanted to be set off by the harmony of rhyme. And as his earlier works wanted no maturity, so his latter wanted no force or spirit. The falling off of his hair had no other consequence than to make his laurels be seen the more.

Sir Samuel Garth, 1717, tr. *Ovid's Metamorphoses,* Preface

No man hath written in our language so much, and so various matter, and in so various manners so well. . . . He was equally excellent in verse and in prose. His prose had all the clearness imaginable, together with all the nobleness of expression; all the graces and ornaments proper and peculiar to it, without deviating into the language or diction of poetry. . . . His versification and his numbers he could learn of nobody; for he first possessed those talents in perfection in our tongue. And they, who have best succeeded in them since his time, have been indebted to his example. . . . Take his

verses and divest them of their rhymes, disjoint them in their numbers, transpose their expressions, make what arrangement and disposition you please of his words, yet shall there eternally be poetry, and something which will be found incapable of being resolved into absolute prose; an incontestable characteristic of a truly poetical genius. I will say but one word more in general of his writings, which is, that what he has done in any one species, or distinct kind, would have been sufficient to have acquired him a great name. If he had written nothing but his prefaces, or nothing but his songs or his prologues, each of them would have entitled him to the preference and distinction of excelling in his kind.

William Congreve, 1717, ed. *The Works of John Dryden,* Dedication, ed. Scott and Saintsbury, vol. II, pp. 18, 19

His literature, though not always free from ostentation, will be commonly found either obvious, and made his own by the art of dressing it; or superficial, which, by what he gives, shews what he wanted; or erroneous, hastily collected, and negligently scattered. Yet it cannot be said that his genius is ever unprovided of matter, or that his fancy languishes in penury of ideas. His works abound with knowledge, and sparkle with illustrations. There is scarcely any science or faculty that does not supply him with occasional images and lucky similitudes; every page discovers a mind very widely acquainted both with art and nature, and in full possession of great stores of intellectual wealth. Of him that knows much it is natural to suppose that he has read with diligence: yet I rather believe that the knowledge of Dryden was gleaned from accidental intelligence and various conversation, by a quick apprehension, a judicious selection, and a happy memory, a keen appetite of knowledge, and a powerful digestion; by vigilance that permitted nothing to pass without notice, and a habit of reflection that suffered nothing useful to be lost. A mind like Dryden's, always curious, always active, to which every understanding was proud to be associated, and of which every one solicited the regard, by an ambitious display of himself, had a more pleasant, perhaps a nearer way to knowledge than by the silent progress of solitary reading. I do not suppose that he despised books, or intentionally neglected them; but that he was carried out, by the impetuosity of his genius, to more vivid and speedy instructors; and that his studies were rather desultory and fortuitous than constant and systematical.

Samuel Johnson, 1779-81, *Dryden, Lives of the English Poets*

I was much pleased to hear of your engagement with Dryden: not that he is, as a poet, any great favourite of mine: I admire his talents and genius highly,—but his is not a poetical genius. The only qualities I can find in Dryden that are *essentially* poetical, are a certain ardour and impetuosity

of mind, with an excellent ear. It may seem strange that I do not add to this, great command of language: *That* he certainly has, and of such language, too, as it is most desirable that a poet should possess, or rather that he should not be without. But it is not language that is, in the highest sense of the word, poetical, being neither of the imagination nor of the passions; I mean the amiable, the ennobling, or the intense passions. I do not mean to say that there is nothing of this in Dryden, but as little, I think, as is possible, considering how much he has written. . . . Dryden had neither a tender heart nor a lofty sense of moral dignity.

William Wordsworth, 1805, *Letter to Scott, Scott's Life,* ed. Lockhart

Dryden was, beyond all comparison, the greatest poet of his own day; and, endued as he was with a vigorous and discursive imagination, and possessing a mastery over his language which no later writer has attained, if he had known nothing of foreign literature, and been left to form himself on the models of Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton; or if he had lived in the country, at a distance from the pollutions of courts, factions, and playhouses, there is reason to think that he would have built up the pure and original school of English poetry so firmly, as to have made it impossible for fashion, or caprice, or prejudice of any sort, ever to have rendered any other popular among our own inhabitants. As it is, he has not written one line that is pathetic, and very few that can be considered as sublime.

Francis, Lord Jeffrey, 1819-44, *Contributions to the Edinburgh Review,* vol. II, p. 291

A strong, sharp, subtle and versatile intellect, and a fine ear for numbers, which with practice gave him a matchless power of versification, are Dryden's chief characteristics of excellence as a poet. The self-contained, self-subsisting imagination of the greater Milton is wanting. He has more strength and larger grasp of mind than his more polished and equable successor, Pope, who divides with him suffrages for the superior place among our classic poets of second rank.

W. D. Christie, 1870, ed. *Poetical Works of John Dryden,* Memoir, p. xv

Dryden has left undone what he should have done, and has done what he should not have done. . . . His was a singularly solid and judicious mind, an excellent reasoner, accustomed to discriminate his ideas, armed with good long meditated proofs, strong in discussion, asserting principles, establishing his subdivisions, citing authorities, drawing inferences; so that, if we read his prefaces without reading his dramas, we might take him for one of the

masters of the dramatic art. He naturally attains a definite prose style; his ideas are unfolded with breadth and clearness; his style is well moulded, exact and simple, free from the affectations and ornaments with which Pope afterwards burdened his own; his expression is, like that of Corneille, ample and periodic, by virtue simply of the internal argumentativeness which unfolds and sustains it. We can see that he thinks, and that on his own behalf; that he combines and verifies his thoughts; that beyond all this, he naturally has a just perception, and that with his method he has good sense. . . . I have found in him beautiful pieces, but never pleasing ones; he cannot even argue with taste. . . . In spite of several falls and many slips, he shows a mind constantly upright, bending rather from conventionality than from nature, with a dash and afflatus, occupied with grave thoughts, and subjecting his conduct to his convictions.

H. A. Taine, 1871, *History of English Literature,* vol. II, bk. iii, ch. ii, pp. 9, 27, 30

To the plays of Dryden we must not look for the enduring part of his writings. Versatile, vigorous, and inventive as they are, they nevertheless lack wit and genuine pathos, and they are disfigured by bombast, and a coarseness of the crudest, not satisfactorily explained by the prevailing profligacy of the time, or excused by the tardy regrets of the poet's maturer years. Few of them survived the age of their writer. It is in his satires, translations, fables, and prologues, where he gives full play to his matchless mastery over heroics, that his successes are most signal. As a satirist he wa probably unequalled, whether for command of language, management of metre, or the power of reasoning in verse.

Austin Dobson, 1874-79, *Handbook of English Literature,* p. 106

Dryden's conversion to Catholicism had a great indirect influence on the preservation of his fame. It was this which gained him the discipleship and loving imitation of Pope. He thus became by accident, as it were, the literary father and chief model of the greatest poet of the next generation. If his fame had stood simply upon his merits as a poet, he would in all likelihood have been a much less imposing figure in literary history than he is now. The splendid force of his satire must always be admired, but there is surprisingly little of the vast mass of his writings that can be considered worthy of lasting remembrance. He showed little inventive genius. He was simply a masterly *littérateur* of immense intellectual energy, whose one lucky hit was the first splendid application of heroic couplets to satire and religious, moral, and political argument. Upon this lucky hit supervened another, the accidental discipleship of Pope. Dryden lent his gift of verse to the service of politics, and his fame profited by the connection. It would be unjust to

say that his fame was due to this, but it was helped by this; apart from the attachment of Pope, he owed to party also something of the favor of Johnson and the personal championship and editorial zeal of Scott.

William Minto, 1877, *Encyclopædia Britannica,* Ninth Edition, vol. VII

We now possess, thanks to Mr. Christie and Mr. Ker, scholarly, if not irreproachable, editions of Dryden's poems and of his chief prose writings. His dramas, which, aside from their historical importance, contain much of his best poetry, have yet to be made generally accessible. But a greater need than this remains to be supplied. Despite the seamy side of his character, which is only too obvious, Dryden had a personality full of grace and charm, which reveals itself to sympathetic readers of his works, and for which illustration might be found in contemporary literature. But he has been unfortunate in his biographers. Even Johnson and Scott, of whom most might have been expected, dwell too exclusively on the literary and political aspects of his career. Hence Dryden, who should be as well loved as Dr. Johnson or Charles Lamb—to choose widely different illustrations—is known to the "average man" only as a political and religious turn-coat, who wrote satires on forgotten men and dead isues. Some true lover may yet produce an imaginative portrait of Dryden such as Carlyle has given us of Burns, showing him as the "high and remarkable man" he really was.

G. R. Noyes, 1900, "Dryden as a Critic," *The Nation,* vol. 71, p. 232

SAMUEL PEPYS

1633-1703

Born in London(?), 23 Feb. 1633. Early education at a school at Huntingdon. At St. Paul's School, London, as Scholar. Matric., Trin. Hall, Camb., 21 June 1650; removed to Magdalene Coll., as Sizar, 5 March 1651; B. A., 1653; M. A., 1660. Married Elizabeth St. Michel, 1 Dec. 1655. Sec. to Sir Edward Montagu, 1656-60. Clerk of the Acts, July 1660. Clerk of Privy Seal, July 1660. Justice of the Peace, Aug. 1660. Younger Brother of the Trinity House, Feb. 1662. Mem. of Tangier Commission, Aug. 1662; Treasurer, March 1665. F. R. S., 15 Feb. 1665. Surveyor-General of Victualling Office, Oct. 1665. Visit to France and Holland, 1669. Sec. for the Affairs of the Navy, 1673. M. P. for Castle Rising, Nov. 1673. Master of Trinity House, 1676 and 1685. Governor of Christ's Hospital, 1676; Treasurer, 1698; Vice-Pres., 1699. Master of Clothworkers Co., 1677. M. P. for Harwich, 1679. Committed to Tower, on charge of Treason, 22 May, 1679; released March 1680. To Tangier with Lord Dartmouth, 1683. Pres., Royal Soc., Nov. 1684. M. P. for Harwich, 1685. Sec. of Admirality, June 1686. Resigned office, March 1689. Imprisoned in Gate-house on

charge of Treason, 25 June to July, 1689. Retired to Clapham, 1690. Died there, 26 May, 1703. Buried in St. Olave's, Hart Street. WORKS: *The Portugal History* (under initials: S. P. Esq.), 1677; *Memoirs relating to the State of the Royal Navy* (anon.). 1690. POSTHUMOUS: Diary, ed. by Lord Braybrooke, 1825; ed. by H. B. Wheatley (8 vols.), 1893, etc.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors*, p. 225

SEE: Arthur Bryant, *Samuel Pepys*, 1933-1938, 3v.; *Letters of Samuel Pepys and His Family Circle*, ed. Helen Truesdell Heath, 1955.

PERSONAL

Memorandum: that Peapys and Hind were solemnly admonished by myself and Mr. Hill, for having been scandalously over-served with drink y^{e} night before. This was done in the presence of all the Fellows then resident, in Mr. Hill's chamber.

John Wood, 1653, *Registrar's Book*, Magdalene College, Cambridge, Oct. 21

This day died Mr. Sam. Pepys, a very worthy, industrious and curious person, none in England exceeding him in knowledge of the navy, in w^{ch} he had passed thro' all the most considerable offices, Clerk of the Acts, and Secretary of the Admiralty, all w^{ch} he perform'd with great integrity. . . . He liv'd at Clapham, where he enjoy'd the fruite of his labours in greate prosperity. He was universally belov'd, hospitable, generous, learned in many things, skill'd in music, a very greate cherisher of learned men of whom he had the conversation. His library and collection of other curiosities were of the most considerable, the models of ships especially. Besides what he publish'd of an account of the Navy, as he found and left it, he had for divers yeares under his hand the *History of the Navy*, or *Navalia* as he call'd it; but how far advanc'd, and what will follow of his, is left, I suppose, to his sister's son Mr. Jackson, a young gentleman whom Mr. Pepys had educated in all sorts of useful learning, sending him to travel abroad, from whence he return'd with extraordinary accomplishments, and worthy to be heir. Mr. Pepys had been for neere 40 yeaers so much my particular friend, that Mr. Jackson sent me complet mourning, desiring me to be one to hold up the pall at his magnificent obsequies, but my indisposition hinder'd me from doing him this last office.

John Evelyn, 1703, *Diary*, May 26

The administration of the Admiralty under Pepys is still regarded as a model for order and economy.

David Hume, 1854-62, *History of England, James II.*, ch. lxxi

It is well known that the naval history of Charles II. is the most shining part of the annals of his reign; and that the business of the navy was conducted with the utmost regularity and prudence, under Charles and James, by this worthy and judicious person. He first reduced the affairs of the admiralty to order and method; and that method was so just, as to have been a standing model to his successors in his important office. His *Memoirs,* relating to the navy, is a well written piece; and his copious collection of manuscripts, now remaining, with the rest of his library, at Magdalen College, in Cambridge, is an invaluable treasure of naval knowledge. He was far from being a mere man of business; his conversation and address has been greatly refined by travel. He thoroughly understood and practised music; was a judge of painting, sculpture, and architecture; and had more than a superficial knowledge in history and philosophy. His fame among the virtuosi was such, that he was thought a very proper person to be placed at the head of the Royal Society, of which he was some time president.

James Granger, 1769-1824, *Biographical History of England,* vol. VI, p. 132

Though we laugh at Pepys with his cockney revels, and his beatitudes of lace and velvet, and his delight at having his head patted by Lord Clarendon, and his honest uproariness, and his not knowing; "what to think," between his transport with the court beauties, and the harm he is afraid they will do the state—we feel that he ends in being a thoroughly honest man, and even a very clever one, and that we could have grown serious in his behalf, had his comfort or good name been put in jeopardy.

Leigh Hunt, 841, *Men, Women and Books*

The pronunciation of Pepys's name has long been a disputed point, but although the most usual form at the present day is *Peps,* there can be little doubt that in his own time the name was pronounced as if written *Peeps.* The reasons for this opinion are: (1) that the name was sometimes so spelt phonetically by some of his contemporaries, as in the Coffee-house paper quoted in the *Diary* (ed. Mynors Bright, vol. vi, p. 292): "On Tuesday last Mr. Peeps went to Windsor," &c.; (2) that this pronunciation is still the received one at Magdalene College, Cambridge; and (3) that the present bearers of the name so pronounce it.

Henry B. Wheatley, 1880, *Samuel Pepys and the World He Lived in,* Preface, p. vii

He must always be doing something agreeable, and, by preference, two agreeable things at once. In his house he had a box of carpenter's tools, two dogs, an eagle, a canary, and a blackbird that whistled tunes, lest, even

in that full life, he should chance upon an empty moment. If he had to wait for a dish of poached eggs, he must put in the time by playing on the flageolet; if a sermon were dull, he must read in the book of Tobit or divert his mind with sly advances on the nearest women. When he walked, it must be with a book in his pocket to beguile the way in case the nightingales were silent; and even along the streets of London, with so many pretty faces to be spied for and dignitaries to be saluted, his trail was marked by little debts "for wine, pictures, etc.," the true headmark of a life intolerant of any joyless passage. He had a kind of idealism in pleasure; like the princess in the fairy story, he was conscious of a rose-leaf out of place. Dearly as he loved to talk, he could not enjoy nor shine in a conversation when he thought himself unsuitably dressed. Dearly as he loved eating, he "knew not how to eat alone"; pleasure for him must heighten pleasure; and the eye and ear must be flattered like the palate ere he avow himself content.

Robert Louis Stevenson, 1882, "Samuel Pepys,"
Familiar Studies of Men and Books

Diary

Of very great interest and curiosity. . . . Fortunately for the public part of the story, the author was, from the very beginning, in immediate contact with persons in high office and about court—and, still more fortunately for the private part, seems to have been possessed of the most extraordinary activity, and the most indiscriminating, insatiable, and miscellaneous curiosity, that ever prompted the researches, or supplied the pen, of a daily chronicler.

Francis, Lord Jeffrey, 1825, "Pepys's Memoirs,"
Edinburgh Review, vol. 43, p. 26

If quitting the broad path of history we seek for minute information concerning ancient manners and customs, the progress of arts and sciences, and the various branches of antiquity, we have never seen a mine so rich as the volumes before us. The variety of Pepys's tastes and pursuits led him into almost every department of life.

Sir Walter Scott, 1826, "Pepys's Memoirs,"
Quarterly Review, vol. 33, p. 308

No history gives us so clear an understanding of the moral condition of average men after the restoration of the Stuarts as the unconscious blabbings of the Puritan tailor's son, with his two consciences, as it were,—an inward, still sensitive in spots, though mostly toughened to India-rubber, and good

rather for rubbing out old scores than retaining them, and an outward, alert, and termagantly effective in Mrs. Pepys.

James Russell Lowell, 1871, "A Great Public Character," *My Study Windows,* p. 91

The importance of Pepys's *Diary,* historically speaking, may be summed up by saying that without it the history of the court of Charles II could not have been written. We do not, it is true, gain from it any information as to what was going on in the country. Utterly destitute of imagination or political knowledge, Pepys could only record the sights and the gossip that were evident to all. It is because he did record these, without hesitation or concealment, that from his *Diary* we can understand the brilliancy and wickedness of the court, as well as the social state and daily life of the bourgeois class.

Osmund Airy, 1885, *Encyclopædia Britannica,* vol. XVIII

It is scarcely literature—that is to say, there is neither art nor effort at construction; but Pepys has extraordinary picturesqueness and great capacity in describing what he has seen in the best and briefest words. Evelyn's diary has a coldness, a dignity, in its ease, that suggest that he conceived that the world might force it into publication. Pepys believed himself absolutely safe behind the veil of his cipher, and he made no effort to paint the lily.

Edmund Gosse, 1888, *A History of Eighteenth Century Literature,* p. 97

In spite of all the research which has brought to light so many incidents of interest in the life of Samuel Pepys, we cannot but feel how dry these facts are when placed by the side of the living details of the *Diary.* It is in its pages that the true man is displayed, and it has therefore not been thought necessary here to do more than set down in chronological order such facts as are known of the life outside the *Diary.*

Henry B. Wheatley, 1893, ed., *The Diary of Samuel Pepys,* vol. 1, p. liii

There is possible misapprehension of Pepys's character, which may be removed by argument, if it is anywhere entertained. Pepys is so little reticent about his follies, blunders, and misfortunes that he may create in some minds the impression that he was a booby and ridiculous person. The *Diary* in truth, with all its particularity and sincerity, is unjust to its author. The reader has to remind himself that it is microscopic, and that to get a just view of Pepys one ought not to know all about him. It may be difficult to understand where there was room for all his work, in the perpetual trade of

morning draughts and suppers, plays in the afternoon, and the lute and the theorbo in the evening. But the secret of the *Diary,* if there be a secret in it, is that it was written by an industrious man of business, who did well for himself, and worked honestly for his office.

W. P. Ker, 1894, *English Prose,* ed. Craik, vol. III

JOHN LOCKE
1632-1704

Born, at Wrington, Somerset, 29 Aug. 1632. At Westminster School, 1646(?)-52. Matric. Ch. Ch., Oxford, as Junior Student, 27 Nov. 1652; B. A., 14 Feb. 1656; M. A., 29 June 1658; Greek Lecturer, 1661; Reader in Rhetoric, 1662; Censor of Moral Philosophy, 1663. Student at Gray's Inn. 1656. Incorporated at Cambridge, 1663. Sec. to Sir Walter Vane on embassy to Brandenburg, Dec. 1665 to Feb. 1666. Settled again at Oxford on his return to England. F.R.S., 23 Nov. 1668. Studied medicine, and practised as physician. B. Med., Oxford, 6 Feb. 1675. Resided in house of first Earl of Shaftesbury, as physician, from 1667. Visit to France, Sept. 1672. Sec. of Presentations to Earl of Shaftesbury, when latter became Lord Chancellor, Nov. 1672. Sec. to Council of Trade, Oct. 1673-75. At Montpellier, for health, Dec. 1675 to March 1677. In Paris, as tutor to a son of Sir John Banks, May 1677 to June 1678; at Montpellier, Oct. to Nov. 1678; in Paris, Nov. 1678 to April 1679. Returned to England. Resided chiefly with Earl of Shaftesbury, 1679-81; at Oxford, 1681-83. Being suspected of treason, retired to Holland, autumn of 1683. Expelled from studentship at Ch. Ch., Oxford, Nov. 1684. In Holland, 1683-89. Returned to England, Feb. 1689. Commissioner of Appeals, 1689-1704. Lived at Westminster, 1689-91; removed to Oates, High Laver, Essex, 1691. Mem. of Council of Trade, May 1696 to 1700. Lived at Oates, boarding in household of Sir Francis Masham, 1700-04. Died at Oates, 28 Oct. 1704. Buried in High Laver Churchyard. WORKS: *Methode nouvelle de dresser les Recueils,* 1686 (English trans., called: *A New Method of Making Commonplace Books,* 1697); *Epistola de Tolerantia,* 1689 (English trans. by W. Popple, same year); *A Second Letter concerning Toleration* (signed: *Philanthropus*), 1690; *A Third Letter* (signed: *Philanthropus*), 1690; *An Essay concerning Humane Understanding,* 1690; *Two Treatises of Government* (anon.), 1690; *Five Letters concerning the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures* (anon.; attrib. to Locke), 1690; *Some Considerations of the consequences of the Lowering of Interest* (anon.), 1692; *Some Thoughts concerning Education* (anon.), 1693; *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (anon.), 1695; *Short Observations on a printed paper intituled, "For encouraging the Coining of Silver Money in England"* (anon.), 1695; *Further Considerations Concerning Raising the Value of Money,* 1695; *Letter to the . . . Lord Bishop of Worcester,* 1697; *Reply to the Bishop of Worcester's Answer to his Letter,* 1697; *Reply to the Bishop's Answer to his Second Letter,* 1697; *A Commonplace Book in reference to the Holy Bible* (anon.; attrib. to Locke), 1697. POSTHUMOUS:

A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians (6 pts.), 1705-1707; *The History of Our Saviour* (anon.; attrib. to Locke), 1705; *Select Moral Books of the Old Testament . . . paraphrased* (anon.; attrib. to Locke), 1706; *A Paraphrase and Notes on the First Epistle . . . to the Corinthians* (anon.), 1706; *Posthumous Works,* 1706; *Some Familiar Letters,* 1708; *Remains,* 1714; *A Collection of several Pieces,* 1720; *Elements of Natural Philosophy* (1750?); *Some Thoughts on the conduct of the Understanding,* 1762; *Observations upon the Growth and Culture of Vines and Olives,* 1766; *Discourses translated from Nicole's Essays,* ed. by T. Hancock, 1828; *Original Letters of Locke, A Sidney and Lord Shaftesbury,* ed. by T. Forster, 1830. He *edited*: Æsop's *Fables,* 1703. *Collected Works*: in 3 vols., 1714; in 10 vols., 1823. *Life*: by H. R. Fox Bourne, 1876; by T. Fowler, 1880.

R. Farquharson Sharp, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors,* p. 170

See: *The Educational Writings,* ed. J. W. Adamson, 1912, rev. 1922; K. MacLean, *John Locke and English Literature of the Eighteenth Century,* 1936; J. W. Gough, *John Locke's Political Philosophy,* 1950; Maurice Cranston, *Locke: A Biography,* 1957.

Personal

If we consider his genius and penetrating and exact judgment, or the strictness of his morals, has scarce any superior, and few equals, now living.

Thomas Sydenham, 1675, *Observationes Medicæ circa Morborum Acutorum Historium et Curationem*

John Locke lives very quietly with us, and not a word ever drops from his mouth that discovers anything of his heart within. Now his master is fled, I suppose we shall have him altogether. He seems to be a man of very good converse, and that we have of him with content; as for what else he is he keeps it to himself, and therefore troubles not us with it nor we him.

Humphrey Prideaux, 1682, *Letter to John Ellis,* Oct. 24, Camden Soc. Pub.

Mr. Locke being, as your Lordship is truly informed, a person who was much trusted by the late Earl of Shaftesbury, and who is suspected to be ill-affected to the Government, I have for divers years had an eye upon him; but so close has his guard been on himself, that after several strict inquiries, I may confidently affirm there is not any one in the college, however familiar with him, who has heard him speak a word either against, or so much as concerning the Government; and although very frequently, both in public and in private, discourses have been purposely introduced, to the disparagement of his master, the Earl of Shaftesbury, his party, and designs, he could never be provoked to take any notice, or discover in word or look the least

concern; so that I believe there is not in the world such a master of taciturnity and passion.

John Fell, 1684, *Letter to Sunderland*

John Locke hated tyranny and persecution as a philosopher; but his intellect and his temper preserved him from the violence of a partisan. He had lived on confidential terms with Shaftesbury, and had thus incurred the displeasure of the court. Locke's prudence had, however, been such that it would have been to little purpose to bring him even before the corrupt and partial tribunals of that age. In one point, however, he was vulnerable. He was a student of Christ Church in the University of Oxford. It was determined to drive him from that celebrated college the greatest man of whom it could ever boast; but this was not easy. Locke had, at Oxford, abstained from expressing any opinion on the politics of the day. Spies had been set about him. Doctors of divinity and masters of arts had not been ashamed to perform the vilest of all offices, that of watching the lips of a companion in order to report his words to his ruin. The conversation in the hall had been purposely turned to irritating topics, to the Exclusion Bill, and to the character of the Earl of Shaftesbury, but in vain. Locke never broke out, never dissembled, but maintained such steady silence and composure as forced the tools of power to own with vexation that never man was so complete a master of his tongue and of his passions. When it was found that treachery could do nothing, arbitrary power was used. After vainly trying to inveigle Locke into a fault, the government resolved to punish him without one. Orders came from Whitehall that he should be ejected, and those orders the dean and canons made haste to obey.

Thomas Babington Macaulay, 1843, "John Locke," *Critical and Historical Essays*

He was pre-eminently a philosopher—that is, a lover of wisdom. Whether, till late in life at any rate, it ever occurred to him that he could teach much to the world may well be doubted. For a long while he was content to do all he could in teaching himself. With that object he studied all that Oxford could provide for him; all that, in his student's quarters at Christ Church, in the society of friends outside of the university, and in the more bustling scenes that he occasionally visited, he could learn of the ways and thoughts of men, and the best means of helping them to lead worthy and happy lives. With that object he read all the books that came in his way, romances and travel-books as well as abstruse treatises of every sort, and applied himself with special eagerness, not only to the medical and kindred researches that were directly connected with the practical work to which he was anxious to devote his life, but also to every other scientific pursuit that he deemed useful in disclosing the secrets of nature and promoting the welfare of man-

kind. With that object, also he accustomed himself to write down his thoughts on all kinds of subjects, not, it would seem, with the design of giving them to the world, but in order thus to be the better able to test their value, and see how much truth was in them.

H. R. Fox Bourne, 1876, *Life of John Locke,* vol. I, p. 145

On the Human Understanding (1690)

Were it fit to trouble thee with the history of this "Essay," I should tell thee that five or six friends meeting at my chamber, and discoursing on a subject very remote from this, found themselves quickly at a stand, by the difficulties that arose on every side. After we had a while puzzled ourselves, without coming any nearer a resolution of those doubts which perplexed us, it came into my thoughts, that we took a wrong course, and that, before we set ourselves upon inquiries of that nature, it was necessary to examine our own abilities, and see what objects our understandings were, or were not, fitted to deal with. This I proposed to the company, who all readily assented; and thereupon it was agreed that this should be our first inquiry. Some hasty and undigested thoughts, on a subject I had never before considered, which I set down against our next meeting, gave the first entrance into this discourse; which, having been begun by chance, was continued by entreaty; written by incoherent parcels, and after long intervals of neglect, returned again as my humour or occasions permitted; and at last, in a retirement, where an attendance on my health gave me leisure, it was brought into that order thou now seest it.

John Locke, 1690, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* Epistle to the Reader

To none do we owe for a greater advancement in this part of philosophy, [logic] than to the incomparable Mr. Locke, who, in his *Essay of Human Understanding,* hath rectified more received mistakes, and delivered more profound truths, established on experience and observation, for the direction of man's mind in the prosecution of knowledge, which I think may be properly termed logic, than are to be met with in all the volumes of the ancients. He has clearly overthrown all those metaphysical whimsies which infected men's brains with a spice of madness, whereby they feigned a knowledge where they had none by making a noise with sounds without clear and distinct significations.

William Molyneux, 1692, *Dioptrica Nova,* Dedication

No serious work is less read than that of Locke. I very much doubt whether there be a single person in Paris who has perused from beginning to end the

Essay on the Human Understanding. It is much talked of and quoted, but always upon trust. . . . In most other books, even of little value, there are some instructive or amusing passages, but in the Essay there is nothing to console you; it is as dreary as a vast Arabian desert. Not the smallest *oasis,* not a single inch of verdure, to afford the weary traveller a temporary refreshment. . . . The proper title of the work is not "An Essay on the Human Understanding," but "An Essay on the Understanding of John Locke." It is, in fact, a full length portrait of the author, executed to the life. We recognise at the first glance a man of natural good sense and honesty, but completely bewildered and led astray by party spirit, besides being absolutely deficient in power of thinking and in the most ordinary philosophical learning. . . . The icy dulness of his style would have destroyed, in a great measure, the effect of his detestable doctrines; but it was warmed into life in the hot-houses of Paris, and there brought forth the revolutionary monster that has devoured Europe. *Contempt of Locke is the beginning of wisdom.*

Joseph Maistre, 1822, *Evenings at St. Petersburgh*

Few among the great names in philosophy have met with a harder measure of justice from the present generation than Locke, the unquestioned founder of the analytic philosophy of mind, but whose doctrines were first caricatured, then, when the reaction arrived, cast off by the prevailing school even with contumely, and who is now regarded by one of the conflicting parties in philosophy as an apostle of heresy and sophistry; while among those who still adhere to the standard which he raised, there has been a disposition in later times to sacrifice his reputation in favor of Hobbes; a great writer and a great thinker for his time, but inferior to Locke not only in sober judgment but even in profundity and original genius. Locke, the most candid of philosophers, and one whose speculations bear on every subject the strongest mark of having been wrought out from the materials of his own mind, has been mistaken for an unworthy plagiarist, while Hobbes has been extolled as having anticipated many of his leading doctrines.

John Stuart Mill, 1843, *System of Logic*

Reiterated depreciation had somewhat defaced his image in my mind. The time came however when, for the purposes of this history, I had to read the *Essay on Human Understanding* once more, carefully, pen in hand. The image of John Locke was again revived within me; this time in more than its former splendor. His modesty, honesty, truthfulness, and directness I had never doubted; but now the vigor and originality of his mind, the raciness of his colloquial style, the patient analysis by which he has laid

open to us such vast tracts of thought, and above all, the manliness of his truly practical understanding, are so strongly impressed upon me, that I feel satisfied the best answer to his critics is to say, *"Read him."* From communion with such a mind as his, nothing but good can result. He suggests as much as he teaches.

George Henry Lewes, 1845-67, *Biographical History of Philosophy*

In regard to style, it is generally agreed that the prose of Locke is the best of his times; and it requires no great knowledge of the English to perceive in it the manners of a man who has lived in the best society, and who expresses his thoughts without pedantry, in the most clear, most simple, and most familiar terms. . . . I need not tell you that the eminent characteristic of this style is clearness.

Victor Cousin, 1826-41, *History of Modern Philosophy,* tr. Wight, vol. II, p. 171

It would be absurd to say that Locke's style is nervous, or original, or instinct with any impulse of feeling, or stimulated by any current of imagination. But it is almost always correct; it flows evenly and smoothly, and has dignity and even grace, if it lacks variety and force. . . . If Locke is never original in his style, and never shows the force and vigour of one who speaks straight to the deeper instincts of human nature, we must still accord to him the praise of regularity, of dignity, of scrupulous accuracy in diction, up to the measure of logical accuracy to which his thought attained.

Henry Craik, 1894, *English Prose,* vol. III, p. 179